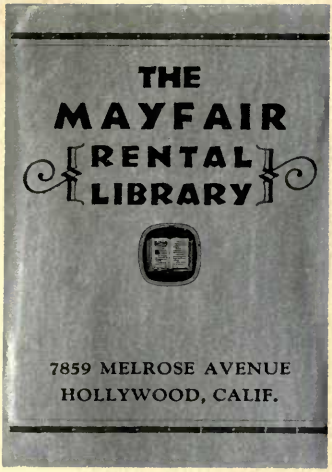
MANY KINGDOMS

ELIZABETH JORDAN



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[See page 234

"HE EXPERIENCED A RUDE AWAKENING"

MANY KINGDOMS

BY

ELIZABETH JORDAN

AUTHOR OF
"MAY IVERSON — HER BOOK"
"TALES OF THE CLOISTER"
"TALES OF DESTINY"
ETC. ETC.

. . . "The state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection."

—SHAKESPEARE.

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MANY KINGDOMS

MANY KINGDOMS

I

VARICK'S LADY O' DREAMS

VARICK laid down the book with which he had beguiled an hour of the night, turned off the electric light in the shaded globe that hung above his head, pulled the sheets a little nearer his chin, reversed his pillow that he might rest his cheek more gratefully on the cooler linen, stretched, yawned, and composed himself to slumber with an absolutely untroubled conscience.

He was an eminently practical and almost rudely healthy young man, with an unreflecting belief in the existence of things he had seen, and considerable doubt concerning those which he had not seen. In his heart he regarded sentiment as the expression of a flabby nature in a feeble body. Once or twice he had casually re-

marked to his intimates that he supposed he'd fall in love some time—other chaps did; and he had, also, in an unusually candid moment, given to a choice company of his chums the benefit of his conviction that when a fellow did care for a woman, and got her, he ought to treat her properly, by George! and see that she had amusements and was not neglected as lots of 'em did neglect their wives. His friends had dropped all other interests of the moment to solicitously inquire the name of the celestial being who was inspiring these uplifting theories. Varick had first flouted the idea with a laugh, and then carefully explained that while women collectively were "all right," as individuals he had "no use for 'em"; after which he had smiled his own surprisingly seraphic smile and returned to the cleaning of the various guns on which his deepest affections were then centred. From all this it will be seen that Varick was not a person to have unusual psychological experiences.

For a few moments, on this particular night, his thoughts turned pleasantly from one to another of the quiet delights of the morning's fishing. The book he had dropped was *Fly-Rods and Fly-Tackle*, and, like all enthusiastic anglers,

he pined to give the author the benefit of his piscatorial experiences and of a few discoveries he himself had made as to certain flies and their action under given conditions. He had fished all the morning and played golf all the afternoon, and he had finished the day with a swim in the club pool, subsequently appearing at dinner with a showily red face and very wet hair, to argue fiercely over the soup concerning the merits of a horse his cousin wanted him to buy. Then he had played a few rubbers of bridge at five cents a point, and had retired to his own rooms bearing some nineteen dollars in good American money reluctantly bestowed upon him by his opponents in the game. Altogether it had been a fairly pleasant day, very much like most of the other days in his untroubled life.

Varick stretched his athletic young body luxuriously between the sheets, yawned once more, stared into the semi-darkness, heard a distant clock strike two, and wondered mildly why he was not more sleepy. There was a dim light burning in the hall beyond his bedroom, and by its reflection, through the transom over the door, he could see quite plainly the various pieces of furniture around him—his

dressing-case, with its array of silver toilet articles, the solid front of his chiffonnier, the carved arms of his favorite lounging-chair, even the etchings and prints on the walls. Suddenly, as he looked at these familiar objects, a light haze fell over them, giving him for an instant the impression that a gauze curtain had been dropped between them and his eyes. They slowly melted away, and in their place he saw the streets of a tiny village in some foreign country which he did not know. A moment later, in what seemed at the time a perfectly natural transition from his bed in an Adirondack club-house, he was walking up the streets of the little town, in correct tourist attire, looking in vain for a familiar landmark, and with a strange sinking of the heart. How he got there, or why he was there, was equally incomprehensible to him. It was high noon of a warm summer day, and the red roofs of the old buildings seemed to glow in the heat. Before him, at the end of the street down which he was walking, was a public square where marketing was going on in the open. It was crowded with men and women in picturesque peasant costumes he did not recognize, though he had travelled a great deal. As he drew

nearer he heard them speaking, but discovered that their tongue was as unknown to him as their garb. He knew French, German, and Italian well; he had, in addition, a smattering of Spanish, and was familiar with the accents of Slavic tongues. But this babel that met his ears was something new. Taken in connection with the rest of the experience, the discovery sent a cold chill down the spinal column of Mr. Lawrence Varick. For the first time in his debonair life he was afraid, and admitted it inwardly, with a sudden whitening of the lips.

"It's so infernally queer," he told himself, uneasily. "If I could remember how I got here, or if I knew anything about the place—"

"Have you classified them?" asked a voice at his elbow. It was feminine, contralto, and exquisitely modulated. The words were English, but spoken with a slight foreign accent. With a leap of the heart Varick turned and looked at the speaker.

She was young, he saw at once—twenty-two, twenty-three, possibly twenty-four. He inclined to the last theory as he observed her perfect poise and self-possession. She was exquisitely dressed; he realized that despite the

dimness of masculine perception on such points, and, much more clearly, saw that she was beautiful. She was small, and the eyes she raised to his were large and deeply brown, with long black lashes that matched in color the wavy hair under her coquettish hat. As he stared at her, with surprise, relief, and admiration struggling in his boyishly handsome face, she smiled, and in that instant the phlegmatic young man experienced a new sensation. His own white teeth flashed as he smiled back at her. Then he remembered that it was necessary to reply to her question.

"I—I—beg your pardon," he stammered, "a—a thousand times. But to tell you the truth, I'm—I'm horribly confused this morning. I—I don't seem, somehow, to place myself yet. And I can't understand what these people say. So, when you spoke English it was such a relief—"

He stopped suddenly and turned a rich crimson. It had occurred to him that this incoherent statement was not quite the one to win interest and admiration from a strange and exceedingly attractive woman. What would she think of him? Perhaps that he was intoxicated, or insane. Varick's imagination,

never lively, distinguished itself during the next few seconds by the stirring possibilities it presented to his mind. He grew redder, which was very unfortunate, and shuffled miserably from one foot to the other, until he noticed that she was looking at him with a glance that was entirely dignified yet very friendly. It had an oddly sympathetic quality in it as well. His spirits rose a trifle.

"You must think me an awful duffer," he murmured, contritely. "I'm not always like this, I assure you."

"I know," she assented. "I understand. Walk on with me. Possibly I may be able to help you."

He bowed assent and the two walked toward the crowded square.

"You're awfully good," he said, feeling reassured, yet still boyish and embarrassed. "I don't want to be a nuisance, but if you'll just put me right, somehow—start me on a path that will lead me home—"

The entire idiocy of this struck him. He stopped again, then burst into his contagious, youthful laughter, in which she instantly joined. The mellow contralto and the clear tenor formed a soft and pleasant duet, but Varick noticed

that not a head in the crowd around them turned their way, nor did an eye of all the peasant throng give them a glance. He spoke of this to his companion as they continued their walk.

"The most surprising thing to me in all this —unusualness," he said, "is the cool manner in which these beggars ignore us. You know how such people gape, usually; but not a soul among all these people seems to know we're here."

She looked at him with a gentle amusement and sympathy in her brown eyes.

"That is not surprising," she said, quietly. "For, you know, we are not here—really."

Varick stopped for the second time and stared at her, with a repetition of that new and annoying sinking in the region of his heart. Her words were certainly disconcerting, but she herself was delightfully human and most reassuringly natural. She had walked on, and he tried to fall into her mood as he overtook her.

"Where are we, then?" he asked, with a short and not especially mirthful laugh.

Her smooth brow wrinkled for a moment.

"I do not know," she said, frankly. "That is, I do not know this place, where we *think* we

are, though I have been here before, and the experience does not frighten me now. But I know where we *really* are. You are asleep somewhere in America, and I—but oh, my dear, my dear, you're going to wake!"

The clock that was somewhere struck three. Varick, sitting up in his bed with eyes staring into the darkness, saw again his familiar room, the dim light, the silver, the dressing-case, the pictures. He sprang to the door opening into the hall, and tried it. It was bolted, as he had left it. So was the other door leading into his sitting-room. The darkness around him still seemed full of the refrain of the words he had just heard—where?

"*Oh, my dear, my dear, you're going to wake!*" And her eyes—her smile—

Varick got into bed again, in a somewhat dazed condition, with a tremor running through it. Very slowly he straightened himself out, very slowly he pulled up the bedclothes. Then he swore solemnly into the obscurity of the room.

"Well, of—all—the—dreams!" he commented, helplessly.

As the months passed, after Varick got back to town and into the whirl of city life, he recalled his dream, frequently at first, then more

rarely, and finally not at all. It was almost a year later when, one night, lying half awake, he saw again the fine, transparent, screen-like veil enshroud the objects in his bedroom. It was winter, and a great log was burning in the large fireplace. He had tried to choke the flames with ashes before he went to bed, but the wood had blazed up again and he had lain quiet, awaiting slumber and blinking indifferently at the light. His bedroom overlooked Fifth Avenue. There was a large club-house just opposite his house, and cabs and carriages still came and went. Varick heard the slam of carriage doors, the click of horses' hoofs on the wet asphalt, and congratulated himself on the common-sense which had inspired him to go to bed at eleven instead of joining the festive throng across the street. He had dutifully spent the morning in his father's offices, and then, with a warming sense of virtue, had run out of town for a late luncheon and a trial of hunters. To-night he was pleasantly tired, but not drowsy. When the curtain fell before his surroundings, and he saw them melting imperceptibly into others quite foreign to them, he at once recalled the similar experience of the year before. With a little

quickening of his steady heart-beats, he awaited developments.

Yes, here was the old town, with its red roofs, its quaint architecture, its crowded, narrow, picturesque streets. But this time they seemed almost deserted, and the whole effect of the place was bleak and dreary. The leaves had dropped from the trees, the flowers had faded, the vines that covered the cottage walls were brown and bare. He was pleasantly conscious of the warmth of a sable-lined coat he had brought from Russia two years before. He thrust his gloved hands deep into its capacious pockets and walked on, his eyes turning to right and left as he went. At intervals he saw a bulky masculine figure, queerly dressed, turn a corner or enter a house. Once or twice one came his way and passed him, but no one looked at him or spoke. For a moment Varick was tempted to knock at one of the inhospitably closed doors and ask for information and directions, but something—he did not know what—restrained him.

When she appeared it was as suddenly as she had come before, with no warning, no approach. She was at his elbow—a bewitching thing of furs and feminine beauty, French

millinery and cordiality. She held out her small hand with a fine *camaraderie.*

"Is it not nice?" she asked at once. "I was afraid I should arrive first and have to wait alone. I would not have liked that."

He held her hand close, looking down at her from his great height, his gray eyes shining into hers.

"Then you knew—you were coming?" he asked, slowly.

"Not until the moment before I came. But when I saw the curtain fall—"

"You saw that, too? A thin, gauzy thing, like a transparency?"

"Yes."

He relapsed into silence for a moment, as he unconsciously adapted his stride to hers, and they walked on together as naturally as if it were an every-day occurrence.

"What do you make of it all?" he at length asked.

She shrugged her shoulders with a little foreign gesture which seemed to him, even then, very characteristic.

"I do not know. It frightened me—a little —at first. Now it does not, for it always ends and I awake—at home."

"Where is that?"

She hesitated.

"I may not tell you," she said, slowly. "I do not quite know why, but I may not. Possibly you may know some time. You, I think, are an American."

He stared hard at her, his smooth face taking on a strangely solemn expression.

"You mean to say," he persisted, "that this is all a dream—that you and I, instead of being here, are really asleep somewhere, on different continents?"

She nodded.

"We are asleep," she said, "on different continents, as you say. Whether we are dreaming or whether our two souls are taking a little excursion through space—oh, who shall say? Who can question the wonderful things which happen in this most wonderful world? I have ceased to question, but I have also ceased to fear."

He made no reply. Somewhere, in the back of his head, lay fear—a very definite, paralyzing fear—that something was wrong with him or with her or with them both. Instead of being in the neutral border-land of dreams, had he not perhaps passed the tragic line dividing the

normal mind from the insane? She seemed to read his thoughts, and her manner became more gentle, almost tender.

"Is it so very dreadful?" she asked, softly. "We are together, you know, my friend. Would it not be worse to wander about alone?"

With a great effort he pulled himself together.

"Infinitely," he said, with gratifying conviction. "And you're—you're a trump, you know. I'm ashamed of acting like such a boor. If you'll bear with me I'll try from now on to be more like a man and less like a fretful ghost."

She clapped her hands.

"Capital!" she cried. "I knew you would—what is the word?—oh yes—*adapt* yourself. And it is only for a little while. You will wake very soon. But you ought to enjoy it while it lasts. There are many amusing things about it all."

Varick reflected grimly that it was the "amusing things" which occasioned his perturbation, but he kept his reflection to himself and smiled down at her sunnily.

"For example," she continued, "as we really do not exist here, and as we are not visible to these people, we cannot do anything that will

affect them in any way or attract their attention. Look at that!"

They were passing a small house whose front door, opening on the street, stood ajar. Within they could see a stout woman standing at a tub and washing busily, and a little girl pouring hot water from a quaint kettle into a large pan full of soiled blue dishes. The pan stood near the edge of a wooden table, and the little girl was perched on a stool just high enough to bring her on a level with her work.

"You are, I am sure, a fine athlete," murmured the woman. "Or else your looks belie you," she added, with a roguish upward glance. "Yet with all your strength you cannot push that pan of dishes off the table."

Without a word, Varick passed through the doorway, strode into the house and up to the table. She followed him closely. He attempted to seize the pan in his powerful hands—and, to his horror, discovered that they held nothing. The pan remained on the table and the child was now unconcernedly washing the blue dishes, humming a little folk-song as she worked. As if to add to the irony of the situation, the small laborer quietly lifted the pan and moved it to a position she thought more convenient. This

was the last touch. With a stifled murmur of intense exasperation, Varick put forth all his strength in a supreme effort. The pan fell, the water and broken blue dishes covering the floor. He sprang back and stood aghast, gazing at the havoc he had wrought.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" murmured the voice at his side. "I never dreamed you could do it, or I would not have suggested it. Oh, oh, the poor little darling!"

For the stout woman at the tub had hastily dropped her work, crossed the room, and was soundly chastising the unhappy infant who she supposed was responsible for the mischief. Varick caught her arm.

"Oh, I say," he cried, "this won't do at all! She didn't do it; it was all my fault. I'll pay for the things. Here—here—"

He fumbled in his pockets as he spoke and pulled out several gold pieces. But the fat arm of the old woman offered no resistance to his grasp, and the gold pieces did not exist for her. It was evident that she saw neither him nor them, nor the woman with him. With an unsparing hand she spanked the child, whose voice rose in shrill lamentations. Varick and his companion in guilt crept out of the room

with a sense of great helplessness upon them, and he breathed a long breath of relief at finding himself—in bed, with a cold February sun shining in through his windows, and the faithful Parker at his side with the quieting announcement that his bath was ready.

One of Varick's boon companions in camp and hunting excursions was a distinguished New York specialist in nervous diseases. A day or two later Varick found it convenient to drop into this man's office and, quite casually, tell him the story of his dreams, giving it various light touches that he fondly imagined concealed the anxiety that lay beneath the recital. "Recurrent dreams," he then learned, were a very common human experience and not deserving of much attention.

"Don't think about it," said his friend. "Of course, if you worry over it, you'll be dreaming it all the time. Send this 'personally conducted tour' to me if you don't like it. I don't mind meeting pretty women who are 'dreams,' whether in the flesh or out of it."

As time went on and the dream did not return, Varick decided that he would not mind, either. He thought of her a great deal; he even longed for her. Eventually he deliberate-

ly tried to induce the dream by going to bed early, putting himself in the proper mental attitude, as he conceived it, and staring wide-eyed into his dimly lighted room. But only once in eighteen months was he even partly successful. Then he saw the haze, saw the familiar streets, saw her far, far ahead of him, and hurrying onward, saw her turn a sharp corner, caught one backward look from her dear brown eyes as she vanished—and awoke! He gave much thought to that look in the months which followed. He was a modest youth, singularly unconscious of his own charms; but the eloquent glance had conveyed to him a sense of longing—of more than longing.

Quite an interval elapsed before she came again. There was, first of all, the inevitable filmy effect, but, in the vis on that succeeded it, instead of finding himself in the little town, he was in the depths of a great old forest, and in horrible agony. Some accident had occurred —he did not know what. He only knew that he was shot, suffering, dying! He groaned, and even as he writhed in a spasm of pain he saw her sitting on the sward beside him. He turned glazed eyes on her. Her brown ones looked back into his with a great love and pity in their depths.

"Oh, my dear," she whispered, "I know it seems terribly hard to you. And because you think you suffer, it is almost as hard for you as if you did. But you are not really hurt, you know. You are not suffering. It is all in the dream. You are sound asleep, far, far away."

He forced a sardonic laugh from his stiff throat.

"Not this time," he managed to articulate. "Whatever the others may have been, this is no dream. This is the real thing—and death!"

She smoothed the hair back from his damp brow with a beautiful, caressing touch. He felt her fingers tremble.

"No," she said. "It is a dream, and almost over."

"Then will you stay with me," he gasped, "to the end?"

"Yes," she promised. "Try to bear it just a moment longer. Courage, dear heart! for already you are waking—you are waking—*you—are—awake!*"

He was, and it was daylight, and around him were the familiar objects of his own room. He wiped his forehead, which was cold and wet. He felt utterly exhausted.

"Stay with me to the end!"

If she only would! If he could find her—find her in this warm, human world, away from that ghastly border-land where they two met. For in that hour he knew he loved—what? A woman or a ghost? A creature of this world or a fantasy of the night? Wherever she was, whatever she was, he loved her and he wanted her. And in that hour of his agony her eyes had told that she loved and wanted him.

It was eight months before they met again. Varick's friends thought him changed, and quite possibly he was. The insouciant boy of twenty-eight had become a man, a sympathetic, serious, thoughtful man, still given to sports and outdoor life, but more than all devoted to a search which had taken him to no end of out-of-the-way European towns. He was sleeping in one of these one night (not *the* one, alas!—he had not found that) when the veil, now so warmly welcome, fell for the fourth time.

He was in an exquisite Italian garden, a place all perfume and May breezes and flooding sunshine and overarching blue sky. As he entered it he saw her coming to meet him, and he went forward to greet her with his pulses bounding and a light in his eyes which no eyes

but hers had ever seen there. Even in that supreme moment the wonderfully *real* atmosphere of it all impressed him. He heard a dry twig crack under his foot as he walked, and he recognized the different perfumes of the flowers around him—the heavy sweetness of a few belated orange blossoms, the delicate breath of the oleander, the reminiscent perfume of the rose. Then their hands met and their eyes, and each drew a long breath, and neither spoke for a moment. When Varick found words they were very commonplace.

"Oh, my love, my love!" he said. And she, listening to them with sudden tears in her brown eyes, seemed to find in them the utmost eloquence of the human tongue.

"It has been so long, so long!" he gasped. "I began to think I was never to see you again."

They drifted side by side along a winding, rose-hedged path, past an old sun-dial, past a triumphant peacock strutting before his mild little mate, past a fountain whose spray flung out to them a welcome. She led the way with the accustomed step of one who knew and loved the place. They came to a marble seat, half hidden by a tangle of vines and scarlet blossoms, and sheltered by overhanging olean-

der branches; there she sat down and moved her skirts aside that he might sit close to her. Her brown eyes, raised now to his hungry gray ones, looked at him with the softened brilliance he had sometimes seen in those of a happy child.

"Should you have missed me," she asked, softly, "if you had never seen me again? Should you have been sorry?"

He drew a long breath.

"I love you," he said. "Whatever you are, wherever you come from, whatever all this means, I love you. I don't understand anything else, but I know that. It's the one sure thing, the one real thing, in all this tangle."

Without a word she put her hand in his. He could feel distinctly its cool, soft, exquisite texture. With an exclamation of delight he drew her toward him, but she held herself away, the expression of her beautiful face softening the effect of the recoil.

"Not yet, dear," she said, gently. "We must be very careful. You do not understand. If you do anything abrupt or sudden you will wake—and then we shall be parted again, who knows for how long!"

There were tears in her eyes as she spoke.

Seeing them, he buried his face in his hands and groaned, while the sense of his utter helplessness rolled over him like a flood.

"God!" he broke out, with sudden fierceness. "What devil's trick is this? It's not a dream. It can't be a dream. Here we are, two human beings in a human world—I'll swear it. Smell that oleander. Listen to that bird sing. Hear the trickle of that fountain. And yet you tell me that we are asleep!"

She laid her head in the curve of her arm, resting on the ivy-covered back of the low seat. Bending over her, he saw that her cheeks were wet. The sight made him desperate.

"Don't!" he cried, hoarsely. "Don't do that! Tell me what is expected of me. Whatever it is, no matter how hard it is, or how long it takes, I'll do it."

She did not reply, but she made a quick little gesture with the hand nearest him. It signified hopelessness, almost despair. Darkness began to fall, and an early moon hung pale in the heavens. Somewhere in the thick bushes near them a nightingale began to sing. To Varick's excited fancy there was a heart-breaking pathos in the soft notes. They seemed to have been together, he and she, for a long time

—for hours. He bent his head till it touched hers.

"But you love me?" he asked. She moved a little and wiped her eyes with an absurdly tiny, lace-edged square of linen. One corner, he noticed, bore an embroidered coronet.

"Yes," she said, very quietly, "I love you."

Her tone as she spoke expressed such entire hopelessness that the full sense of her words did not at once come to him. When it did, slowly, sweetly, she was speaking again.

"But oh, dearest, dearest!" she broke out, "why do we love? To what can love lead us —two poor shadows in a dream world, in which alone we can meet?"

He was silent. There seemed, somehow, nothing that he could say, though later he thought of many words with which he might have filled that throbbing silence. The dusk deepened around them. Off in the thicket the nightingale still warbled passionately, and now the stars began to come out over their heads, pale as yet against the warm blue of the heavens. Varick, sitting stiffly on the old marble bench, became conscious of an odd dizziness, and set his teeth with a sudden determination to show no evidence of it. She

had risen and was moving about among the rose-bushes just behind them. Almost before he missed her she had returned, holding in her hand a beautiful salmon-hued rose, with a flame-colored, crumply heart. He had never before seen one like it. As she held it near him it exhaled an exquisitely reminiscent perfume—a perfume which seemed to breathe of old joys, old memories, and loves of long ago.

"Is it not beautiful?" she said. "It is called the *Toinnette*. Take it, dear, and keep it—for memory." Then, as he took it from her, her eyes widened in a sudden anguish of dread and comprehension.

"Oh, you're leaving me!" she said. "You're waking. Dearest, dearest, stay with me!"

The words and the look that accompanied them galvanized him into sudden action. He sprang to his feet, caught her in his arms, held her there, crushed her there, kissing her eyes, her hair, her exquisitely soft mouth.

"I will not leave you!" he raved. "I swear I won't! I defy the devil that's back of this! I swear—" But she, too, was speaking now, and her words came to his ears as from a long, long distance, sobbingly, with a catch in the breath, but distinct.

"Alas!" she cried, "you have ruined everything! You have ruined everything! You will never see me again. Dearest, dearest—"

He awoke. His heart was thumping to suffocation, and he lay exhausted on his pillow. It was a dark morning, and a cold rain beat dismally against the window-panes. Gone were the Dream Woman, the Italian garden, the song of the nightingale, the perfume of flowers. How definite that perfume had been! He could smell it yet, all around him. It was like —what was it like? He became suddenly conscious of an unusual sensation in his hand, lying on the bedspread. He glanced at it and then sat up with a sudden jerk that almost threw him off his balance. In his upturned palm was a rose—a salmon-colored rose, slightly crushed, but fresh and fragrant, with a flame-colored, crumply heart. Varick stared at it, shut his eyes, opened them, and stared again. It was still there, and, with the discovery that it was, Varick became conscious of a prickling of the scalp, a chill along the spine. His brown face whitened.

"Well, by all the gods!" he gasped. "How did that thing get here?"

No one ever told him. Possibly no one could

except the Dream Woman, and her he never saw again; so the mystery was unfathomable. He put the rose between the leaves of the Bible his mother had given him when he went to college, and which he had not opened since until that morning; and the rose became dry and faded as the years passed, quite as any other rose would have done.

Varick paid a second and quite casual visit to his medical friend, who scoffed at him rudely and urged him to go on a long hunting trip. He went, and was singularly successful, and came back with considerable big game and a rich, brown complexion. When the doctor asked him whether he still awoke from his innocent slumbers to find his little hands full of pretty flowers, Varick swore naturally and healthfully, turned very red, and playfully thumped the medical man between the shoulders with a force that sent that gentleman's eye-glasses off his nose. But, notwithstanding all these reassuring incidents, Varick has never married; and he remains deeply interested as to the source of that rose. He would be very grateful to any one who could tell him where the thing came from. The nearest he ever came to this was when a man who knew a good deal

about flowers once inspected the faded rose, at Varick's request, and listened to the description of how it looked when fresh.

"Why, yes," he said, "I know that variety. It grows in Italy, but I don't think it's known here. They call it the *Toinnette!*"

II

THE EXORCISM OF LILY BELL

IT is quite possible that not even Raymond Mortimer Prescott himself could have told definitely the day or the hour when Lily Bell first came into his life; and as Raymond Mortimer Prescott was not only the sole person privileged to enjoy Miss Bell's society, but was also the sole person who had been permitted to gaze upon her charms at all, it would seem that inquiries directed elsewhere were destined to prove fruitless. Raymond himself, moreover, was not communicative; he had the reserve of an only child whose early efforts at conversation had been discouraged by parents selfishly absorbed in "grown-up" interests, and whose home was too remote from other country homes to attract playmates.

His mother was a nervous invalid, and almost in infancy Raymond had grasped the fact that his absence seemed to be of more definite bene-

fit to her than any other remedy for neurasthenia. His father was a busy man, absent from home for weeks at a time, and bearing this exile with a jovial cheerfulness which did not always characterize his moods when he deigned to join the family circle. Occasionally the elder Prescott experienced a twinge of conscience when he looked at his son, ten years of age now, the possessor of a superbly healthy body and presumably of the social aspirations of growing Americans. In such moments of illumination the father reflected uneasily that "the little beggar must have a beastly lonesome time of it"; then, surveying the little beggar's choice company of pets, gazing upon the dam he had built with his own busy hands, inspecting approvingly his prowess in the swimming-hole and with his fish-rods, even noting, in his conscientious appraisal of his heir's assets, the self-assertive quality of the freckles on his nose and the sunburn on the whole of his visage, this perfunctory American parent easily decided that nothing need be changed for another year or two. It was impossible even for a scrupulous conscience to make a youthful martyr of Raymond Mortimer. Not the most rabid New England brand could compass that, and certainly

Raymond Mortimer Prescott, Sr., had no such possession. The housekeeper, Miss Greene, a former trained nurse who had charge of the boy in infancy, looked after his clothes and his meals. Notwithstanding his steadfast elusiveness, she had also succeeded in making him master of extremely elementary knowledge of letters and figures. Beyond this he was arrogantly ignorant, even to the point of being ignorant of his ignorance. He had his dogs, his rods and tackle, his tool-house, unlimited fresh air, sunshine, and perfect health; in addition he had Lily Bell.

How long he may have enjoyed the pleasure of this young person's company unobserved by his elders is a matter of surmise; it may well have been a long time, for family curiosity never concerned itself with Raymond Mortimer unless he was annoyingly obtrusive or disobedient. But the first domestic records of her arrival, kept naturally enough by Miss Greene, whose lonely spinster heart was the boy's domestic refuge, went back to a day in June when he was five. He was in his nursery and she in an adjoining room, the communicating door of which was open. She had heard him in the nursery talking to himself, as she supposed, for a long

time. At last his voice took on a note of childish irritation, and she distinctly heard his words.

"But it won't be right that way," he was saying, earnestly. "Don't you see it won't be right that way? There won't be nothing to hold up the top."

There was a long silence, in the midst of which Miss Greene stole cautiously to the nursery door and looked in. The boy was on his knees on the floor, an ambitious structure of blocks before him, which he had evidently drawn back to contemplate. His eyes were turned from it, however, and his head was bent a little to the left. He wore a look of great attention and annoyance. He seemed to be listening to a prolonged argument.

"All right," he said, at last. "I'll do it. But it ain't right, and you'll be sorry when you see it fall." He hurriedly rearranged the block structure, adding to the tremulously soaring tower on the left side. True to his prediction, it fell with a crash, destroying other parts of the edifice in its downfall. The boy turned on his unseen companion a face in which triumph and disgust were equally blended. "There, now!" he taunted; "didn't I tell you so, Lily

Bell? But you never will b'lieve what I say—jes like girls!"

Miss Greene hurriedly withdrew, lifting to the ceiling eyes of awed surprise. For some reason which she was subsequently unable to explain, she asked the boy no questions; but she watched him more closely after this, and discovered that, however remote the date of Miss Bell's first appearance, she was now firmly established as a daily guest—an honored one whose influence, though mild, was almost boundless, and whose gentle behests were usually unhesitatingly obeyed. Occasionally, as in the instance of the blocks, Raymond Mortimer combated them; once or twice he disobeyed them. But on the second of these occasions he drooped mournfully through the day, bearing the look of one adrift in the universe; and the observant Miss Greene noted that the following day was a strenuous one, occupied with eager fulfilment of the unexpressed wishes of Lily Bell, who had evidently returned to his side. Again and again the child did things he most obviously would have preferred not to do. The housekeeper looked on with deep but silent interest until she heard him say, for perhaps the tenth time, "Well, I don't like it, but I will if you

really want me to." Then she spoke, but so casually that the boy, absorbed in his play, felt nothing unusual in the question.

"Whom are you talking to, Raymond?" she asked, as she rounded the heel of the stocking she was knitting. He replied abstractedly, without raising his eyes from the work he was doing.

"To Lily Bell," he said.

Miss Greene knitted in silence for a moment. Then, "Where is she?" she asked.

"Why, she's here!" said the child. "Right beside me!"

Miss Greene hesitated and took the plunge. "I don't see her," she remarked, still casually.

This time the boy raised his head and looked at her. There was in his face the slight impatience of one who deals with an inferior understanding.

"'Course you don't," he said, carelessly. "You can't. No one can't see Lily Bell but 'cept me."

Miss Greene felt snubbed, but persevered.

"She doesn't seem to be playing very nicely to-day," she hazarded.

He gave her a worried look.

"She isn't," he conceded, "not very. 'Most

always she's very, very nice, but she's kind of cross to-day. I guess p'r'aps," he speculated, frankly, "you're 'sturbing her by talking so much."

Miss Greene accepted the subtle hint and remained silent. From that time, however, Raymond Mortimer counted on her acceptance of Lily Bell as a recognized personality, and referred to her freely.

"Lily Bell wants us to go on a picnic to-morrow," he announced, one day when he was six. "She says let's go on the island under the willow an' have egg-san'wiches an' ginger-ale for lunch."

Miss Greene carried out the programme cheerfully, for the child made singularly few requests. Thomas, the gardener, was to row them over, and Miss Greene, a stout person who moved with difficulty, seated herself in the stern of the boat with a sigh of relief, and drew Raymond Mortimer down beside her. He wriggled out of her grasp and struggled to his feet, his stout legs apart, his brown eyes determined.

"You can't sit there, please, Miss Greene," he said, almost austerely. "Lily Bell wants to sit there with me. You can take the other seat."

For once the good-natured Miss Greene rebelled.

"I'll do no such thing," she announced, firmly, "flopping round and upsetting the boat and perhaps drowning us all. You and your Lily Bell can sit together in the middle and let me be."

An expression of hope flitted across the child's face. "Will that do, Lily Bell?" he asked, eagerly. The reply was evidently unfavorable, for his jaw fell and he flushed. "She says it won't," he announced, miserably. "I'm awful sorry, Miss Greene, but we'll have to 'sturb you."

If Miss Lily Bell had been in the habit of making such demands, the housekeeper would have continued to rebel. As it was, she had grave doubts of the wisdom of establishing such a dangerous precedent as compliance with the absurd request. But Raymond Mortimer's distress was so genuine, and the pleasure of the picnic so obviously rested on her surrender, that she made it, albeit slowly and with groans and dismal predictions. The boy's face beamed as he thanked her.

"I was so 'fraid Lily Bell would be cross," he confided to her, as he sat sedately on his half

of the stern-seat. "But she's all right, an' we're going to have a lovely time."

That prediction was justified by events, for the occasion was a brilliant one, and Lily Bell's share in it so persistent and convincing that at times Miss Greene actually found herself sharing in the delusion of the little girl's presence. Her good-natured yielding in the matter of the seat, moreover, had evidently commended her to Miss Bell's good graces, and that young person brought out the choicest assortment of her best manners to do honor to the grown-up guest.

"Lily Bell wants you to have this seat, Miss Greene, 'cause it's in the shade an' has a nice back," said Raymond, delightedly, almost as soon as they had reached the island; and Miss Greene flopped into it with a sigh of content in the realization that Miss Bell did not intend to usurp all the choice spots, as her persistence earlier in the day might possibly have suggested to a suspicious mind. There, alternately reading and dozing, she incidentally listened to the flow of conversation poured forth by her small charge, varied only by occasional offerings to her, usually suggested by Miss Bell and ranging from the minnow he had succeeded in catching with a worm and a bent pin to the

choicest tidbits of the luncheon. There were two glasses for the ginger-ale. Miss Greene had one and Lily Bell the other. Raymond Mortimer gallantly drank from the bottle.

"Why don't you use Lily Bell's glass?" was Miss Greene's very natural inquiry. It would seem, indeed, that two such congenial souls would have welcomed the closer union this suggestion invited, but Raymond Mortimer promptly dispelled that illusion.

"She doesn't want to," he responded, gloomily.

In other details, however, Miss Lily Bell was of an engaging sweetness and of a yielding disposition of the utmost correctness. Again and again Raymond Mortimer succeeded in convincing her, by the force and eloquence of his arguments, of the superiority of his ideas on fort building, fishing, and other occupations which filled the day. Miss Greene's heart yearned over the boy as he came to her during the mid-day heat and cuddled down comfortably by her side, heavy-eyed and tired after his exertions.

"Where's Lily Bell?" she asked, brushing his damp hair off his forehead and wondering whether she was also privileged to enjoy the unseen presence of the guest of honor.

"She's back there under the tree takin' a nap," murmured the boy, drowsily, indicating the exact spot with a grimy little hand. "She tol' me to come an' stay with you for a while."

Miss Greene smiled, deeply touched by this sweet mingling of coyness and thoughtfulness on the maiden's part.

"What does Lily Bell call you?" she asked, with interest. The boy snuggled down on the grass beside her and rested his head comfortably in her lap.

"She knows my name's Raymond Mortimer," he said, sleepily, "but she calls me 'Bill' for short." Then, more sleepily, "I asked her to," he added. In another moment his eyelids had dropped and he too was in the Land of Nod, whither Lily Bell had happily preceded him.

During the next four years Miss Greene was privileged to spend many days in the society of Miss Lily Bell, and the acquaintance between them ripened into a pleasant friendship. To her great satisfaction she found Miss Bell's name one to conjure with in those moments of friction which are unavoidable in the relations of old and young.

"I don't think Lily Bell would like that," she began to say, tentatively, when differences of

opinion as to his conduct came up between Raymond and herself. "I think *she* likes a gentlemanly boy."

Unless her young charge was in a very obstinate mood the reminder usually prevailed, and it was of immense value in overcoming the early prejudice of the small boy against soap and water.

"Isn't Lily Bell clean?" she had inquired one day when he was eight and the necessity of the daily tubbing was again being emphasized to him.

Raymond conceded that she was.

"When she first comes she is," he added. "'Course she gets dirty when we play. Why, sometimes she gets awful dirty!"

The excellent and wise woman saw her opportunity, and promptly grasped it.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "that's the point. I want you to start out clean and to go to bed clean. If you'll promise me to take a tub before you dress in the morning, and another before you go to bed at night, I don't care how dirty you get in the mean time."

This happy compromise effected, she was moved to ask more particularly how Miss Lily Bell looked. She recalled now that she had

never heard her described. Raymond Mortimer, she discovered, was no better than the rest of his sex when it came to a description of feminine features and apparel, but on two points his testimony was absolute. Lily Bell had curls and she wore pantalettes. The last word was not in his vocabulary, and it was some time before he succeeded in conveying the correct impression to Miss Greene's mind.

"Don't you remember the little girls in mamma's old Godey books?" he asked, at last, very anxiously, seeing that his early imperfect description had led to an apparent oscillation of Miss Greene's imagination between the paper ruffle of a lamb-chop and a frilly sunbonnet. "They have slippers an' 'lastic bands an' scallopy funnels coming down under their skirts. Well"—this with a long-drawn sigh of relief as she beamed into acquiescence—"that's how Lily Bell looks!"

Long before this the family had accepted Lily Bell as a part of the domestic circle, finding her a fairly trustworthy and convenient playmate for the boy. Not always, of course; for it was very inconvenient to leave a vacant seat beside Raymond Mortimer when they went driving, but this had to be done or Raymond

stayed at home rather than desert his cherished Lily. It was long before his father forgot the noble rebuke administered by his son on one occasion when the elder Prescott, thoughtlessly ignoring the presence of Miss Bell, sought to terminate the argument by sitting down by the boy's side. The shrieks of that youth, usually so self-contained, rent the ambient air.

"Father, *father!*" he howled, literally dancing up and down in his anguish, "you're sitting on Lily Bell!" Then, at the height of the uproar, he stopped short, an expression of overwhelming relief covering his face. "Oh no, you ain't, either," he cried, ecstatically. "She jumped out. But she won't go now, so neither will I"; and he promptly joined his imaginary playmate in the road. Pausing there, he gave his abashed parent a glance of indescribable reproach and a helpful hint on etiquette.

"Don't you know," he asked, stonily, "that gentlemen don't *never* sit on ladies?" Striding gloomily back to the house, presumably close by the side of the outraged maiden, he left his convulsed parent to survive as best he could the deprivation of their presence. This Mr. Prescott did with reluctance. He was beginning to find the society of his son and Lily Bell

both interesting and exhilarating. He showed, in fact, a surprising understanding of and sympathy with "the love-affair," as he called it. "The poor little beggar had to have something," he said, indulgently, "and an imaginary playmate is as safe as anything I know." Therefore he referred to Miss Bell respectfully in conversation with his son, and, save on the tragic occasion just chronicled, treated her with distinguished consideration.

His wife's acceptance of the situation was less felicitous. Mrs. Prescott, whose utter lack of a sense of humor had long saddened her domestic circle, suddenly felt the birth of one now that was even more saddening, and the cause of it was Lily Bell. She referred to that young person wholly without respect, and was convulsed by foolish laughter when her son soberly replied. The boy resented this attitude—first sullenly, then fiercely.

"She acts as if there *wasn't* really any Lily Bell," he confided to his father, in a moment of such emotion. "I don't think that's nice or p'lite, an' it hurts Lily Bell's feelings."

"That's bad," said the father, soberly. "We mustn't have that. I'll speak to your mother."

He did subsequently, and to such good effect

that the expression of Mrs. Prescott's amusement was temporarily checked. But Raymond Mortimer's confidence was temporarily blighted, and he kept his little friend and his mother as far apart as possible. Rarely after that did Lily Bell seek the invalid's room with the boy, though she frequently accompanied him to his father's library when that gentleman was home and, presumably, listened with awe to their inspiring conversation. Mr. Prescott had begun to talk to his boy "as man to man," as he once put it, and the phrase had so delighted the boy, now ten, that his father freely gave him the innocent gratification of listening to it often. Moreover, it helped in certain conversations where questions of morals came up. As the small son of an irate father, Raymond Mortimer might not have been much impressed by the parental theory that watermelons must not be stolen from the patches of their only neighbor, a crusty old bachelor. As a man of the world, however, listening to the views of one wiser and more experienced, he was made to see that helping one's self to the melons of another is really not the sort of thing a decent chap can do. Lily Bell, too, held the elder man's opinion.

"She says she doesn't like it, either," the boy confided to his father with an admiring sigh. "She never would go with me, you know. My!"—this with a heavier sigh—"I'm 'fraid if I do all the things you an' Lily Bell want me to I'll be awful good!"

His father sought to reassure him on this point, but he himself was beginning to cherish a lurking fear of a different character. Was longer continuance of this dream companionship really wise? So far, if it had influenced the boy at all, it had been for good. But he was growing older; he was almost eleven. Was it not time that this imaginary child friend should be eliminated in favor of—of what? The father's mind came up against the question and recoiled, blankly. Not exercise, not outdoor pursuits, not pets, for Raymond Mortimer had all these and more. His little girl friend had not made him a milksop. He was an active, energetic, live, healthy-minded boy, with all a boy's normal interests. When he built kennels for his dogs and made hutches for his rabbits, Lily Bell stood by, it is true, but her friendly supervision but added to the vigor and excellence of his work. Indeed, Lily, despite her pantalettes, seemed to have a sporty vein

in her. Still, the father reflected uneasily, it could lead to no good—this continued abnormal development of the imagination. For Lily Bell was as real to the boy at ten as she had been at six.

What could be done? With what entering wedge could one begin to dislodge this persistent presence? If one sent the boy away, Lily Bell, of course, would go, too. If one brought—if—one—brought—

Mr. Prescott jumped to his feet and slapped his knee with enthusiasm. He had solved his problem, and the solution was exceedingly simple. What, indeed, but another little girl! A real little girl, a flesh-and-blood little girl, a jolly, active little girl, who, as Mr. Prescott inelegantly put it to himself, "would make Lily Bell, with her ringlets and her pantalettes, look like thirty cents." Surely in the circle of their friends and relatives there must be a little girl who could be borrowed and introduced — oh, casually and with infinite tact! — into their ménage for a few months. Mr. Prescott, well pleased with himself, winked a Machiavellian wink and sought his wife, ostensibly to consult her, but in reality to inform her that he had made up his mind, and that it would be her

happy privilege to attend to the trivial details of carrying out his plan.

In exactly three weeks Margaret Hamilton Perry was established in the Prescott homestead for a visit of indefinite length, and in precisely three hours after her arrival Margaret Hamilton had annexed the Prescott homestead and its inmates and all the things appertaining thereto and made them her own. She was the most eager and adorable of small, fat girls—alive from the crown of her curly head to the soles of her sensible little spring-heeled shoes. As Mr. Prescott subsequently remarked in a moment of extreme self-appreciation, if she had been made to order she couldn't have filled the bill better. Born and bred in the city, the country was to her a mine of unexplored delights. The shyness of Raymond Mortimer, suddenly confronted by this new personality and the immediate need of entertaining it, gave way before the enthusiasm of the little girl over his pets, his favorite haunts, the works of his hands — everything in which he had a share. Clinging to his hand in a rapturous panic as they visited the animals, she expatiated on the privileges of those hap-

py beings who lived always amid such delights.

"I wish I didn't ever have to go away again," she ended, wistfully.

"I wish you didn't, either," said Raymond, gallantly, and then was shocked at himself. Was this loyalty to Lily Bell? The reflection gave a tinge of coldness to his next utterance. When Margaret Hamilton, cheered by the tribute, asked, confidently, "May I play with you lots and help you to make things?" the boy's response lagged.

"Yes," he said, finally, "if Lily Bell will let you."

"Who's Lily Bell?"

"She — why, she's the girl I play with! Everybody knows Lily Bell!"

"Oh!"

Some of the brightness was gone from the eager face.

"Will she like me?" she asked, at last.

"I don't know—I guess—p'r'aps so."

"Will I like her?"

"I don't know. You can't see her, you know."

"Can't see her? Why can't I see her? Doesn't she come here, ever?"

"Oh yes, she's here all the time, but—" The boy squirmed. For the first time in his short life he was — *was* he — ashamed of Lily Bell? No; not that. Never that! He held his small head high, and his lips set; but he was a boy, after all, and his voice, to cover the embarrassment, took on a tone of lofty superiority.

"Nobody ever does see her but me," he asserted. "They'd like to, but they don't."

"Why don't they?"

Verily, this was a persistent child. The boy was in for complete surrender, and he made it.

"She ain't a little girl like you," he explained, briefly. "She doesn't have any home, and I don't know where she comes from — heaven, maybe," he hazarded, desperately, as a sort of "When in doubt, play trumps." "But she comes, an' no one but me sees her, an' we play."

"Huh!" This without enthusiasm from Margaret Hamilton Perry. She eyed him remotely for a moment. Then, with an effort at understanding, she spoke again.

"I shouldn't think that would be very much fun," she said, candidly. "Just pretendin' there's a little girl when there ain't! I should think it would be lots nicer—" She hesitated, a

sense of delicacy restraining her from making the point she so obviously had in mind.

"Anyhow," she added, handsomely, "I'll like her an' play with her if you do."

Raymond Mortimer was relieved but doubtful. Memories of the extreme contrariness of Lily Bell on occasion overcame him.

"If she'll let you," he repeated, doggedly.

Margaret Hamilton stared at him and her eyes grew big.

"Won't you let me, if she doesn't?" she gasped. "Why—why—" The situation overcame her. The big, brown eyes filled suddenly. A small gingham back rippling with fat sobs was presented to Raymond Mortimer. In him was born immediately man's antipathy to woman's tears.

"Oh, say," he begged, "don't cry; please don't." He approached the gingham back and touched it tentatively. "She will let you play with us," he urged. And then, moved to entire recklessness as the sobs continued, "*I'll make her!*" he promised. The gingham back stopped heaving; a wet face was turned toward him, and a rainbow arched their little heaven as Margaret Hamilton smiled. Her first triumph was complete.

It is to be regretted that Lily Bell did not at once lend herself to the fulfilment of this agreeable understanding. True, she appeared daily, as of yore, and Margaret Hamilton was permitted to enter her presence and join her games, but the exactions of Lily Bell became hourly more annoying. It was evident that Raymond Mortimer felt them as such, for his anguished blushes testified to the fact when he repeated them to the victim.

"She wants you to go away off and sit down, so's you can't hear what we're saying," he said to Margaret Hamilton one day. "I don't think it's very p'lite of her, but she says you must."

This brief criticism of Lily Bell, the first the boy had ever uttered, cheered the little girl in her exile. "Never mind," she said. "I don't care—much. I know it isn't your fault." For by this time she, too, was under the influence of the spell of convincing reality which Raymond Mortimer succeeded in throwing over his imaginary friend.

"She does things Ray wouldn't do," she once confided to Miss Greene. "I mean," hastily, as she suddenly realized her own words—"I mean she makes him think — he thinks she thinks— Oh, I don't know how to 'splain it

to you!" And Margaret Hamilton hastily abandoned so complicated a problem. In reality she was meeting it with a wisdom far beyond her years. The boy was in the grip of an obsession. Margaret Hamilton would have been sadly puzzled by the words, but in her wise little head lay the idea they convey.

"He thinks she really is here, an' he thinks he's got to be nice to her because they're such ve-ry old fren's," she told herself. "But she isn't very nice lately, an' she makes him cross, so maybe by-an'-by he'll get tired an' make her act better; or maybe—"

But that last "maybe" was too daring to have a place even in the very furthest back part of a little girl's mind.

She lent herself with easy good-nature to Lily Bell's exactions. She had no fondness for that young person, and she let it be seen that she had none, but she was courteous, as to a fellow-guest.

"Pooh! I don't mind," was her usual comment on Miss Bell's behests; and this cheerful acceptance threw into strong relief the dark shadows of Lily Bell's perversity. Once or twice she proposed a holiday.

"Couldn't we go off somewhere, just by our-

selves, for a picnic," she hazarded, one morning—"an' not ask Lily Bell?"

It was a bold suggestion, but the conduct of Miss Bell had been especially reprehensible the day before, and even the dauntless spirit of Margaret Hamilton was sore with the strife.

"Wouldn't you like a—a rest, too?" she added, insinuatingly. Apparently the boy would, for without comment he made the preparations for the day, and soon he and the child were seated side by side in the boat in which the old gardener rowed them over to their beloved island.

It was a perfect day. Nothing was said about Lily Bell, and her presence threw no cloud on those hours of sunshine. Seated adoringly by the boy's side, Margaret Hamilton became initiated into the mysteries of bait and fishing, and the lad's respect for his companion increased visibly when he discovered that she could not only bait his hooks for him, but could string the fish, lay the festive board for luncheon, and set it forth. This was a playmate worth while. Raymond Mortimer, long a slave to the exactions of Lily Bell, for whom he had thanklessly fetched and carried, relaxed easily into the comfort of man's more congenial sphere, and permitted himself to be waited on by woman.

In such and other ways the month of August passed. Margaret Hamilton, like the happy-hearted child she was, sang through the summer days and knitted more closely around her the hearts of her companions.

With the almost uncanny wisdom characteristic of her, she refrained from discussing Lily Bell with the other members of the family. Possibly she took her cue from Raymond Mortimer, who himself spoke of her less and less as the weeks passed; but quite probably it was part of an instinct which forbids one to discuss the failings of one's friends. Lily Bell was to Margaret Hamilton a blot on the boy's scutcheon. She would not point it out even to him, actively as her practical little soul revolted against his self-deception. Once, however, in a rare moment of candor, she unbosomed herself to Mr. Prescott.

"I don't like her very well," she said, referring, of course, to Lily Bell. "She's so silly! I hate to pretend an' pretend an' do things we don't want to do when we could have such good times just by ourselves."

She buried her nose in his waistcoat as she spoke and sniffed rather dismally. It had been a trying day. Lily Bell had been much *en*

evidence, and her presence had weighed perceptibly upon the spirits of the two children.

"Can't you get rid of her?" suggested the man, shamelessly. "A real meat little girl like you ought to do away with a dream kid—an imaginary girl—don't you think?"

Margaret Hamilton raised her head and looked long into the eyes that looked back at her. The man nodded solemnly.

"I'd try if I were you," he said. "I'd try mighty hard. You don't want her around. She's spoiling everything. Besides," he added, half to himself, "it's time the boy got over his nonsense."

Margaret Hamilton reflected, her small face brightening.

"Are you very, very sure it wouldn't be wicked?" she asked, hopefully.

"Yep. Perfectly sure. Go in and win!"

Greatly cheered by this official sanction, Margaret Hamilton the following day made her second suggestion of a day *à deux*.

"All by ourselves," she repeated, firmly. "An' not Lily Bell, 'cos she'd spoil it. An' you row me to the island. Don't let's take Thomas."

This was distinctly wrong. The children

were not allowed to take the boat save under Thomas's careful eye; but, as has been pointed out, Margaret Hamilton had her faults. Raymond Mortimer struggled weakly in the gulf of temptation, then succumbed and went under.

"All right," he said, largely, "I will. We'll have lunch, too, and p'r'aps I'll build a fire."

"We'll play we're cave-dwellers," contributed Margaret Hamilton, whose invention always exceeded his own, and whose imagination had recently been stimulated by Miss Greene, who occasionally read aloud to the children. "You hunt an' get the food an' bring it home, an' I'll cook it. You be the big, brave man an' I'll be your—your mate," she concluded, quoting freely from the latest interesting volume to which she had lent an ear.

The picture appealed to Raymond Mortimer. With a manly stride he approached the boat, helped her in, loosened it from its moorings, and cast off. His brow dark with care, he loftily ordered her to steer, and spoke no more until they had safely made their landing.

Alone on their desert island, the two children faithfully carried out the programme of the day. With dry branches gathered by his mate the intrepid male soon made a fire, and retreat-

ing hurriedly to a point comfortably distant from it, they gazed upon their work. Fishing and the cleaning and cooking of their catch filled the morning; and if, indeed, the cleaning is something the mind would mercifully pass over, those chiefly concerned were satisfied and ate with prodigious appetite.

"It's awful funny," said Raymond Mortimer, comfortably, as they reposed under a tree after their repast, "but when Lily Bell an' I used to come here—"

He stopped and gazed apprehensively behind him, as if fearful that the unbidden guest was even now within hearing. Apparently reassured, he resumed: "When Lily Bell an' I used to come we 'most always went to sleep after awhile. I—we—got kind of tired talking, I guess. But when you an' I talk I don't get tired."

Margaret Hamilton flushed with delight, but an excess of maidenly modesty overcame her at the same moment.

"Why don't you?" she inquired, coyly.

"'Cos I like you better."

Margaret Hamilton gasped, sputtered, looked around her. Everything was in its place; there had been no submarine upheaval. The boy

was there and he had said this thing, the full meaning of which burst suddenly upon her. Rising to her feet, she hurled herself upon him with the impetuosity of her intense nature.

"Do you really?" she gasped and gurgled. "Do you? Oh, do you? Oh, Ray, I'm so glad!"

And she kissed him!

Disengaging himself with dignity from the clinging embrace of the maiden, the outraged youth rose to his feet.

"Don't you ever do that again, Margaret Hamilton Perry," he said, slowly, and with awful sternness. "Don't you ever. Lily Bell never, never did such a thing!"

She retreated, but unabashed.

"It's 'cause I was so glad," she said, happily. "Real girls always do; they're like that. But I won't any more. You like me best, just the same, don't you?" she inquired, anxiously.

He came cautiously nearer.

"Yes, I do," he said, coldly, "but don't you try that any more, or I won't!"

Then they talked of cave-dwellers, and of the pleasant warmth of an open-air fire on an August day, and of marvellous things they would do during the coming weeks. And the ab-

sorption of their conversation was such that when the faithful Thomas, having rowed after them, stealthily approached and smote the boy upon the back, they yelled in startled unison.

That no rancor lingered in the mind of Raymond Mortimer toward the too-demonstrative Margaret Hamilton was proved by the careless remark he made to his father when, some days later, that gentleman uttered a jocund inquiry as to the health of Lily Bell.

His son stared at him for an instant, as one who seeks to recall the snows of yester-year.

"Oh," he said, at last, "I haven't seen her for a long time. She doesn't come round now."

Then, as his father grinned widely over these melancholy tidings, the son flushed crimson.

"Well, I don't care," he said, hotly. "It's all your fault. Didn't you tell me I had to 'muse Margaret? Didn't you? Well—I am. I ain't got time for two. An', anyhow," he concluded, with Adamitic instinct, "Lily Bell stopped coming herself!"

The exorcism of Lily Bell was complete. Unlike more substantial Lily Bells of larger growth, she had known how to make her disappearance coincide with a wish to that effect on the part of her gentleman friend.

III

HER LAST DAY

FOR some time—possibly an hour or more—she sat perfectly still, staring at a wavering line made on the floor by a stray sunbeam which had forced its way through the window of her hotel sitting-room. At first she looked unseeingly, with the dull, introspective gaze of the melancholic. Then she began to notice the thing, and to fear it, and to watch for outlines of a quivering human face, and to tremble a little. Surely there had been a face — she thought vaguely, and puckered her brow in an effort to remember. It was half an hour before she realized what it was, and the passing of fifteen minutes more had been ticked off by a clock on the table near her when she lifted her glance enough to follow the beam along the floor, up the wall, to the pane where it had entered. She rose suddenly. It was long since she had made a consciously voluntary move-

ment, and she knew this. She drew a deep breath as she stood up, and almost on the instant she experienced a life-giving sensation of poise and freedom. The weight fell from her feet, the blackness in which she had lived for weeks unwrapped itself from around her like a departing fog, her lax muscles tightened. She groped her way to the window and stood there for a moment, resting her cheek against the cool pane and gazing up at the sky. Presently her eyes dropped to the level of a distant waterline, and she saw the river and the trees that fringed its distant bank, and the swiftly moving boats on its surface.

She was better. She knew all that this meant, how much and how little. For an interval, long or short, as it should happen to be, she was again a rational human being. She abruptly swerved around from the window and swept the room with her eyes, recognizing it as the one she was occupying before she "went under," as she put it to herself, and trying, from association with the familiar objects around her, to form some idea of the length of this attack.

At the beginning of her breakdown the intervals between intelligent consciousness and

insanity had been long. She was herself, or was able to keep herself fairly in hand, the greater part of the time, and chaos, when it came, lasted only for a few days or weeks. Recently this condition had been reversed. She had lost knowledge of time, but she felt that centuries must have passed since those last flying, blessed hours when she knew herself at least for what she was. She grasped now at her returning reason, with a desperate, shuddering little moan, which she quickly stifled. Some one must be near, she remembered, on guard: her nurse, or a hotel maid if the nurse was taking one of her infrequent outings. Whoever was in charge of her must be in the next room, for the door was open between the two. The nurse would welcome her return, the patient reflected. It was her habit—a singularly pathetic habit, the nurse had found it — to refer always to her attacks as "absences," and to temporary recovery as "returns."

She moved toward the open door and then stopped, feeling suddenly that she was not yet ready to talk to any one, even the nurse, for whom she had a casually friendly feeling based on dependence and continued association. She wished to think—dear God, to be able to think

again!—and there seemed so much thinking to be done and so little time in which to do it. Her heart dropped a beat as she realized that. On how much time could she safely count, she wondered. A week? A few days? It had never been less than a week, until the last episode. She turned from the thought of that with a sick shudder, but memory dragged it up and ruthlessly held it before her—the hour, the moment, the very place she was sitting when it occurred. She had been talking to a friend, who unconsciously said something that annoyed and excited her. She saw now that friend's face growing dim before her eyes—at first puzzled, then frightened, then writhing and twisting into hideous shapes, she thought, until in her horror she had struck at it. She must not think of that, she knew, as she set her teeth and pulled herself up short. She had a will of extraordinary strength, her physicians and nurses had conceded, and she resolved that it should serve her now. With grim determination she pieced together the patches of memory left to her. She had had three days then—three short days. She dared not count on even that much respite now, though she might possibly have it and more. But one day—surely Providence

would let her have one day—one *last* day. Her friends and the specialists had begun to talk of asylums. She had heard whispers of them before she succumbed to this last attack; and though her memory of what occurred in it was mercifully vague, she dimly recalled struggles and the shrieks of some one in agony—her own shrieks, she knew now, though she had not known it then. It all meant that she was getting worse and more "difficult." It all meant chronic invalidism, constant care, eventual confinement.

Her brain was now abnormally clear, supernaturally active. It worked with an eager deference, as if striving to atone for the periods when it failed her. The little clock struck ten. It was early—she had a long day before her, a beautiful spring day; for she noticed now the tender green of the leaves and the youth of the grass. How interesting it would be, she reflected, idly, to go out into the free, busy world and mingle with human beings, and walk the city streets and come into touch with life and the living. She would go, she would spend the day that way; but, alas! the nurse would go, too — cool, kind, professional, alert, quietly watchful. If she could in any way elude her and go alone. . . .

Her eyes narrowed and took on a look of cunning as she turned them sidewise toward the open door. As stealthily as a cat she crept to it and looked in. On a divan in the farthest corner the nurse lay stretched in a deep sleep, whose unpremeditatedness was shown by the book which lay on the floor, dropped, evidently, from her suddenly relaxed fingers. The patient retreated as noiselessly as she had advanced, and, going to a mantel-mirror in her sitting-room, turned on her reflection there a long and frightened look. She saw a woman of thirty-five, thin, pale, haggard, high-bred. Her hair had been arranged in accordance with the nurse's conception of comfort and economy of time, and though her gown was perfect in its fit and tailor-made severity, the lace at her neck and in the sleeves of her silk waist was not wholly fresh. Her lips curled as she looked. This was she, Alice Stansbury, the wreck of a woman who had once had health and beauty and wealth and position. The last two were in a degree left to her, but what difference did it make how she looked, she asked herself, harshly. Even as the thought came, however, she took off her waist and sewed clean lace cuffs on the sleeves, replacing the collar with a fresh one. Then she

took down her hair and rearranged it, rapidly but with care. It was a simple matter to change her slippers for walking-boots, and to find her hat and coat and gloves in their old places. Miss Manuel, the nurse, *was* reliable, she told herself again as she put them on, feeling a moment's gratitude to the woman for trying to keep her "up," even during her "absences," to something approaching the standard a gentlewoman's birth and breeding demanded. Her money, or at least a large part of it, for she did not stop to count it, she found in the despatch-box where she had put it on their arrival in New York, and the key was with others on a ring in the private drawer of her writing-desk. Hurriedly she selected several large bills and put them into a silver purse, pressing it deep into the pocket of her walking-skirt with some vague fear that she might lose it. Then she replaced the box and locked the desk, dropping the key in her pocket. Her movements were extraordinarily swift and noiseless. In twenty minutes from the time she had looked in on the nurse she was ready for the street.

A second glance into the inner room showed her that Miss Manuel was still sleeping. She

regarded her distrustfully for an instant, and on a sudden impulse sat down at her desk and wrote a message on a sheet of the hotel paper.

"I am going out for the day. *I will return to-night.* Do nothing, consult no one. I am quite able to take care of myself. Don't make a sensation for the newspapers! ALICE STANSBURY."

"That last sentence will quiet her," she reflected, with cool satisfaction, as she pinned the note to the side of the mirror. "She won't care to advertise far and wide that she has temporarily mislaid a patient!"

The most difficult thing of all remained to be done. The outer door of her own room was locked and the key was missing. To leave the apartment she must pass through the room where Miss Manuel lay asleep. She held her breath, but crossed in safety, though Miss Manuel stirred and murmured something, as if subconsciously warned of danger. Miss Stansbury closed the door noiselessly behind her and stood silent for a moment in the hall, glancing about her and planning the wisest method of getting away. She knew better than to enter any of the hotel elevators. While there was no certainty that she would be detained if she

did, there had been a great deal of interest in her when she arrived at the hotel, and there was every chance that some employé might think it a wise precaution to ask her nurse a question or two after she departed. Then Miss Manuel would be hot upon her trail, and her day would be spoiled. She crept cautiously along the rear halls, keeping out of sight on each floor when the elevators were passing, and meeting only strangers and one preoccupied porter. Her rooms were on the fifth floor, but she descended the four flights of stairs in safety, and, going triumphantly out of the rear entrance of the hotel, found herself in the quiet street on which it opened. The great building was on a corner, and as she crossed its threshold she saw a trolley-car passing along the avenue at her right. On a quick impulse she signalled. When it stopped she entered and seated herself in a corner, surveying her fellow-passengers with seeming unconcern, though her breath came fast. She was safe; she was off! She decided to ride on until she made her plans and knew in more detail what should be done with this gift of the gods, a day that was all her own.

It had been a long time since she had been alone, she suddenly remembered. There had

been outings, of course, and shopping expeditions and the like, but always Miss Manuel or one of her kind had been at her elbow—sometimes professionally cheerful, sometimes professionally grave, but at all times professionally watchful. The woman exulted fiercely in her new-found liberty. She had hours before her—free, glorious hours. She would use them, fill them, squander them in a prodigal spending, following every impulse, indulging every desire, for they were hers and they were her last. In the depths of her brain lay a resolution as silent, as deadly, as a coiled serpent waiting to strike. She would enter no asylums, she would endure no more "absences," she would have no more supervision, no more consultations, no more half-concealed fear of friends, no more pity from strangers. There was a way of escaping all this forever, and she knew it and would take it, though it led across the dim threshold over which she could never return.

The car hummed as it sped along. At a distance she saw an entrance to Central Park, and from the inside the branches of trees seemed to wave a salute to her in honor of her freedom. She signalled to the conductor and left the car,

retracing her steps until she entered the Park. She was far up-town, near the northern end of it, and the paths, warm in the spring sunshine, were almost deserted. For a while she strolled idly about, her senses revelling in the freshness and beauty around her, in the green vistas that opened to right and left, and the soft breeze that fanned her face. Children, riding tricycles or rolling hoops, raced past her; and once, after she had walked almost an hour, a small boy of four slipped his hand into her gloved one and trotted beside her for a moment, to the open scandal of his nurse. She smiled down at him, pleased by the touch of his little fingers. When he left, as abruptly as he had joined her, and in response to a stentorian Irish summons from the rear, she felt a rather surprising degree of regret. The momentary contact had given her a pleasant sense of companionship; for the first time it came to her that it would be better to have a sharer of this day of days—no hireling, no scientific-eyed caretaker, but a little child or a friend, some one, any one, whom she liked and who liked her, and who, like the little boy, did not know the truth about her.

Her spirits dropped as suddenly as they had

risen, and she felt tired and disappointed. Almost unconsciously she dropped on a bench to rest, her eyes still following the figure of the child, now almost out of sight around a distant bend. The bench was off the path, and she had been too preoccupied when she sat down to notice that it had another occupant; but as the figure of her little friend vanished and she turned her eyes away with a sigh, she found herself looking into those of a man. He was very young, hardly more than a boy, and he occupied the far end of the seat, one arm thrown across the back of it, his knees crossed, and his body so turned that he faced her. The thing she saw in his eyes held her own fastened to them, at first in surprise, then in sudden comprehension. It was hunger. With a long look she took him in — the pinched pallor of his smooth, handsome young face, the feverish brightness of his gray eyes, the shabbiness of his well-made, well-fitting clothes, even the rent in the side of one of his patent-leather shoes. His linen was clean, and his cuffs were fastened with cheap black links; she reflected instinctively that he had pawned those whose place they obviously filled, and then her mind returned at once to her first discovery, that he

was hungry. There was no mistaking it. She had never seen hunger in a face before, but she recognized it now. He had taken off his hat and dropped it on the bench beside him. His brown hair was short and wavy, and one lock on his left temple was white. He had been writing a note, or possibly an advertisement for work, with a stub of lead-pencil on a scrap of paper resting on his knee, and now he suddenly raised his eyes—either in an abstracted search for the right word or because her appearance had startled him.

Without hesitation she spoke to him.

"Pardon me," she said, impersonally. "May I ask you some questions?"

He looked at her, and the understanding of his situation revealed in her glance brought the blood to his face. He straightened himself, his lips parting for a reply, but she gave him no time to speak. .

"I am a stranger here," she continued, "and New York is not always kind to strangers. You seem to be unhappy, too. I wonder if we cannot help each other."

He smiled with an unyouthful bitterness.

"I'm afraid I'm not much use — to myself or any one else," he answered, with hard delib-

eration. Then his face underwent a change as he looked at hers and read in it, inexperienced as he was, some of the tragic writing of Fate's inexorable hand. His voice showed his altered mood.

"Of course," he added, quickly, "if there's really anything I can do. I know the town well enough. Perhaps I can help you if you want to get anywhere. What is it you would like?"

Her face, under the sudden idea which came to her, could hardly be said to brighten, but it changed, becoming less of a mask, more human. She felt a thrill of unaccustomed interest, less in him than in the plan which he unconsciously suggested. Here at last was something to do. Here was a companion who did not know her. He was watching her closely now, and it came to him for the first time, with a sense of surprise, that this strange woman who had spoken to him was not old, and was even attractive.

"I think you can help me, if you will," she went on, quietly. "As I have said, I am a stranger in New York. I have never seen anything of it except the streets I passed through this morning between the Park and my hotel.

But I've always wanted to see it, and to-day is my first and only opportunity, for I am going away to-night."

He surveyed her thoughtfully. The shadow had returned to his face, and it was plain that under his air of courteous interest stirred the self-despair she had surprised in her first look at him.

"Of course I can make out a sight-seer's list for you," he said, when she stopped, "and I will, with pleasure. I think you'd better drop into the Metropolitan Art Galleries while you're in the Park. I'll write the other places in their street order going down-town, so you won't waste time doubling on your tracks. Have you a bit of paper?"

He began to fumble in his own pockets as he spoke, but vaguely, as one who knows the search is vain. She shook her head.

"No," she told him, "and I don't want one. That isn't my idea at all—a list of places to look up all alone and a dismal round of dreary sight-seeing. What I would like"—she smiled almost demurely—"is a 'personally conducted' tour. Are you very busy?"

He flushed again and looked at her, this time with a veiled suspicion in his glance. She met

it with such calm appreciation that it changed to one of surprised doubt. She knew perfectly what was passing in his mind, and it caused her no more concern than the puzzled silence of a child who has heard a new word. She went on as complacently as if he were the little boy who had walked beside her a few moments before.

"In Paris and London," she remarked, "one can engage a guide, a gentleman, for a day at a fixed price. Probably there are such guides here in New York, if I knew where they were to be found and had the time to look for them. You are much younger than I am. You might almost be my son! Moreover, you will not mind my saying that I fancied you were unemployed and possibly were looking for employment. You can hardly help seeing the definite connection in all this."

His eyes met hers for a moment and then dropped. He blushed boyishly.

"I see you're trying to help me," he murmured, apologetically.

She went on as if she had not heard him.

"Let me employ you for the day. I need amusement, interest, occupation — more than you can imagine. I am in the same mood, as far as desolation and discouragement go, that

you are in. I must be about, seeing people and diverting my mind. We can each supply the other with one thing that we need. I have money. To earn a little of that professionally, by a humane service, should really appeal to you."

Something in her voice as she uttered the last words made him turn toward her again. As he looked, his young face softened. She waited in silence for what he would say.

He sat up and straightened his shoulders with a quick gesture.

"You are right," he said, "but I'm awfully afraid you'll get the worst of it. I'm not an ornamental escort for a lady, as you see." He looked at his broken shoe, and then at her. Her expression showed entire indifference to the point he had raised.

"We will consider it settled," she said. "You will take my purse and pay our joint expenses. I think," she went on, as she handed it to him, "we'll omit the Metropolitan. After miles of the Louvre and the Luxembourg and the Vatican, I don't seem to crave miles of that. Suppose we take a cab and drive round. I want to see the streets, and the crowds, and the different types of men and women, and the slums. I

used to be interested in Settlement work, long ago."

"Pardon me," he said. "You have won your case. I will serve you to the best of my ability. But as a preliminary I insist on counting the money in this purse, and on your seeing that my accounts are all right."

"Do as you like about that," she replied, indifferently, but her glance rested on him with a glint of approval.

He deliberately counted the bills. "There are three hundred and forty dollars," he said, replacing them.

She nodded absently. She had sunk into a momentary reverie, from which he did not arouse her until she suddenly looked at her watch. "Why, it's after twelve!" she exclaimed, with more animation than she had yet shown. "We'll go to Delmonico's or Sherry's for luncheon, and make our programme while we're there."

He started, and leaned forward, fixing his eyes on her, but she did not meet them. She replaced her watch in her belt with a successful assumption of abstraction, but she was full of doubt as to how he would take this first proposition. The next instant the bench trembled

under the force with which he had dropped back on it.

"God!" he cried, hoarsely, "it's all a put-up job to feed me because you suspect I'm hungry! No, you don't even suspect—you *know* I'm hungry!"

She put her hand on his arm, and the gesture silenced him.

"Be quiet," she said. "Suppose you are hungry? What of it? Is it a disgrace to be hungry? Men and women deliberately cultivate the condition! Come," she ended, as she rose abruptly, "keep to your bargain. We both need our luncheon."

He replaced the purse in the inside-pocket of his coat, and rose. They walked a few moments without a word. She noticed how well he carried himself and how muscular and athletic his figure appeared even in its shabby clothes. As they strolled toward the nearest exit she talked of the Park, and asked him a few matter-of-fact questions, to which he replied with growing animation. "I can't give you figures and statistics, I'm afraid," he added, smiling.

She shook her head. "It would be sad if you could," she said. "Give me anything but information. As for statistics, I've a constitu-

tional distaste for them. Where can we find a cab?"

"We won't find a cab," he explained, with an authoritative independence which somehow appealed to her. "We'll take this trolley-car and ride to within a short walk of Delmonico's. After luncheon we'll find cabs at every turn."

He helped her into a car as he spoke, and paid their fare from her purse, flushing as he had to change a five-dollar note to do so. The simple act emphasized for him, as no words could have done, his peculiar relation to this strange woman, whom he had never seen until half an hour ago. Balancing the purse in his hand, he glanced at her, taking in almost unconsciously the tragic droop of her lips, the prematurely gray locks in her dark hair, and the unchanging gloom of her brown eyes.

"How do you know I won't drop off the car at some corner and abscond with this?" he asked, in a low voice.

She looked at him calmly.

"I think I know you will not. But if you did it would hurt me."

"Would it spoil your day?"

"Yes," she conceded, "it would spoil my day."

"Well," he announced, judiciously, "you shall not have to reproach me with anything of that kind. Your day shall be a success if I can make it so."

His manner was more than gentle. His mood was one of gratitude and pleasant expectation. He was getting to know her and was sorry for her—possibly because she trusted him and was sorry for him. She was not the companion he would have chosen for a day's outing, and it was doubtful if she would be any too cheerful; but he would serve her loyally, wherever this queer adventure led, and he was young enough to appreciate its possibilities. Inwardly she was amused by his little affectation of experience, of ripe age addressing youth, but it was so unconsciously done, so unconquerably youthful, that it added to the interest he had aroused in her. She liked, too, his freshness and boyish beauty, and his habit of asserting his sense of honor above everything. Above all things, she liked his ignorance of her. To him, she was merely a woman like other women; there was a satisfaction to her in that thought as deep as it was indescribable. The only other occupants of the car were a messenger-boy, lost to his surroundings in a paper-covered novel,

and a commercial traveller whose brow was corrugated by mental strain over a note-book.

"There are some things I would like to do in New York," she confided. "We will do them now—lunch at Delmonico's, go sight-seeing all the afternoon, dine at Sherry's, and go to the theatre this evening. Which is the best play in town?"

"Well—er—that, you know, depends on what you like," hazarded the boy, sagely. "Do you prefer comedy, tragedy, or melodrama?"

She reflected.

"Something light," she decided; "something airy and effervescent—with no problems or even thoughts in it."

His eyes twinkled as he smiled at her. If these were her tastes, she was getting on, he reflected, and the vista of the long day before him offered attractions.

"'Peter Pan'!" he exclaimed. "That's all those things. I've not seen it, but I've read the criticisms, and I know a fellow who has gone five times."

"Testimony enough," agreed his companion. "We'll go to 'Peter Pan.' Now tell me something about yourself."

"Is that in the bond?"

"No. That would be a gift."

"I'd—I'd rather not, if you don't mind."

He indulged in his inevitable painful blush as he spoke, but she stared at him without pity and with a sudden hauteur which gave him a glimpse of another side of her complex nature. This woman who picked up strange youths in the street and spent the day with them was obviously accustomed to unquestioning deference from others. He edged away from her, firm but unhappy.

"You're right," she said, at last. "We'll add a clause to our compact and play we're disembodied spirits. Neither of us will ask the other a personal question."

"Agreed, and thank you. It's not that I wouldn't be flattered, you know, by your interest, and all that," he went on, awkwardly. "It's only because it's such a beastly harrowing recital and shows me up in such—such an inefficient light. It would depress you, and it couldn't do me any good. The things about myself are what I want to get away from—for a while."

They were soon at Delmonico's, and she followed him into the main dining-room, where

she selected a table at a window looking out on the Avenue. The head waiter glanced at him, hesitated, surveyed her, and showed that he was indeed a good servant who knew his own. He hovered over them with deepening interest as they scanned the menu.

The boy smiled at his companion, trying not to notice the smell of the food around them, nor the horrible sinking sensation which overwhelmed him at intervals. A sickening fear swept over him that he would faint before luncheon came—faint on a lady's hands, and from starvation at that! He plunged into conversation with reckless vivacity.

When the waiter came with the oysters she set the example of eating them at once. Her companion followed it in leisurely fashion. She told herself that he was a thoroughbred, and that she had not been mistaken in him, but she would almost have preferred to see him eat wolfishly. His restraint got on her nerves. She could not eat, though she made a pretence of it. When he had eaten his soup with the same careful deliberation, a little color came into his face. She observed this, and her tension relaxed.

"The last time I was here," he said, absently, "was two years ago. One of the fellows at

New Haven had a birthday, and we celebrated it in the corner room just above this. It was a pretty lively dinner. We kept it up from seven o'clock until two in the morning, and then we all went out on the Avenue and sat down in the middle of the street, where it was cool, to smoke and talk it over. That was Davidson's idea. It annoyed the cabmen and policemen horribly. They have such ready tempers and such torpid minds."

The recital and the picture it called up amused her.

"What else did you do?" she asked, with interest.

"I'm afraid I don't remember much of it," he confessed. "I know we were pretty silly; but I do remember how foolish the head waiter looked when Davidson insisted on kissing him good-bye in the hall out there, and cried because he didn't know when he'd see him again. Of course you can't see how funny that was, because you don't know Davidson. He was the most dignified chap at college, and hated gush more than any one I ever knew."

He drank the last of his black coffee with a sigh of content, and blew a last ring from the cigar she had insisted that he should smoke.

"Don't you think," he hazarded, "that it would be jolly to drive up and down Broadway and Fifth Avenue for an hour or two? If you want crowds, they're there; and if you see anything worth closer inspection, we can get out and look at it."

She agreed, and he paid the bill, tipping the waiter discriminatingly.

As their hansom threaded its way through the crowded street she rarely smiled, but her sombre eyes took in everything, and she "said things," as the boy put it, which he recalled and quoted years afterward. Incidentally she talked of herself, though always without giving him a clew as to who she was and where she came from. Several times, as a face in the passing throng caught her interest, she outlined for him in a few terse words the character of its possessor. He was interested, but he must have unconsciously suggested a certain unbelief in her intuition, for once she stopped speaking and looked at him sharply.

"You think I don't know," she said, "but I do. We always know, until we kill the gift with conventionalities. We're born with an intuitive knowledge of character. Savages have it, and animals, and babies. We lose it as we

advance in civilization, for then we distrust our impressions and force our likes and dislikes to follow the dictates of policy. I've worked hard to keep and develop my insight, and behold my reward! I recognized you at the first glance as the perfect companion of a day."

The boy's face flamed with pleasure.

"Then it is a success?"

"It is a success. But it's also five o'clock. What next?"

"Then it's been a success?" he repeated, dreamily—"so far, I mean. We've done so little in one way, but I'm awfully glad you've liked it. We'll drop into Sherry's now for a cup of tea and a buttered English muffin and the beautiful ladies and the Hungarian Band. Then, instead of dining there, suppose we go to some gayer, more typical New York place—one of the big Broadway restaurants? That will show you another 'phase,' as you say; and the cooking is almost as good."

She agreed at once. "I think I'd like that," she said. "I want as much variety as I can get."

He leaned toward her impressively over the little table in the tea-room, recalling her unexpected tribute to the "perfect companion,"

and feeling all at once surprisingly well acquainted with her.

"What a pity you've got to go away tonight!" he murmured, ingenuously. "There's so much left to do."

For an instant, as memory rolled over her, her heart stopped beating. He observed her change of expression and looked at her with a sympathetic question in his gray eyes.

"Can't you change your plans?" he suggested, hopefully. "Must you go?"

"No, they're not that kind of plans. I must go."

As she spoke her face had the colorlessness and the immobility he had seen in it during the first moments it was turned toward him in the morning, and her features suddenly looked old and drawn. Under the revelation of a trouble greater than he could understand, the boy dropped his eyes.

"By Jove!" he thought, suddenly, "she's got something the matter with her." He wondered what it was, and the idea flashed over him that it might be an incurable disease. Only the year before he had heard a friend receive his death-warrant in a specialist's office, and the memory of the experience remained with him.

He was so deep in these reflections that for a moment he forgot to speak, and she in her turn sat silent.

"I'm sorry," he then said, awkwardly. Then, rightly divining the quickest way to divert her thoughts, he suggested that they should drive again before dinner, for an hour or two, to get the effect of the twilight and the early lights on Broadway.

She agreed at once, as she had agreed to most of his suggestions, and her face when she looked at him was serene again, but he was not wholly reassured. In silence he followed her to the cab.

Over their dinner that night in the glittering Broadway restaurant, with the swinging music of French and German waltzes in their ears, she relaxed again from the impersonal attitude she had observed during the greater part of the day. She looked at him more as if she saw him, he told himself, but he could not flatter himself that the change was due to any deepening of her interest in him. It was merely that she knew him better, and that their long hours of sight-seeing had verified her judgment of him.

Their talk swept over the world. He realized that she had lived much abroad and had known

many interesting men and women. From casual remarks she dropped he learned that she was an orphan, unmarried, with no close ties, and that her home was not near New York. This, when the next day, after a dazed reading of the morning newspapers, he summed up his knowledge of her, was all he could recall—the garnered drift-wood of a talk that had extended over twelve hours.

"You look," he said once, glancing critically at her, "as if you had lived for centuries and had learned all the lessons life could teach."

She shook her head. "I have lived for centuries, so far as that goes," she said, "but of all the lessons I've really learned only one."

"And that is?"

"How little it all amounts to."

Again, as he studied her, he experienced an unpleasant little tremor. He felt at the same time an odd conviction that this woman had played a part all day, and that now, through fatigue and depression, she was tiring of her rôle and would cast it away, showing herself to him as she was. For some reason he did not want this. The face behind the mask, of which he was beginning to get a glimpse at intervals, was a face he feared he would not like. He

shrank from it as a child shrinks from what it does not understand.

Much to his relief, she threw off the dark mood that seemed to threaten her, and at the play she was more human than she had been yet.

"Ah, that first act," she said, as the curtain fell on Peter Pan's flight through the window with the Darling Children—"that delicious first act! Of course Barrie can't keep it up—no one could. But the humor of it and the tenderness and the naïveté! Only a grown-up with the heart of a child could really appreciate it."

"And you are that?" he asked, daringly. He knew she was not.

"Only for this half-hour," she smiled. "I may get critical at any moment and entirely out of touch."

She did not, however, and watching her indulgent appreciation of the little boys in Never Never Land, he unconsciously reflected that, after all, this must be the real woman. That other personality, some sudden disheartening side of which he got from time to time, was not his new friend who laughed like a young girl over the crocodile with the clock inside, and showed a sudden swift moisture in her brown eyes when the actress pleaded for the dying fairy.

When the curtain fell on the last act, leaving Peter Pan alone with his twinkling fairy friends in his little home high among the trees, Alice Stansbury turned to her companion with the sudden change of expression he had learned to dread. The pupils of her eyes were strangely dilated, and she was evidently laboring under some suppressed excitement. She spoke to him curtly and coolly.

"We'll have a Welsh rabbit somewhere," she said, "and then I'll go—back." He was struck by this use of the word, and by the tone of her voice as she said it. "Back," he repeated, mentally—"back to something mighty unpleasant, I'll wager."

At the restaurant she ate nothing and said little. All the snap and sparkle had gone out of the day and out of their companionship as well. Even the music was mournful, as if in tacit sympathy, and the faces of the diners around them looked tired and old. When they left the dining-room they stood together for an instant in the vestibule opening into the street. No one was near them, and they were for the moment beyond the reach of curious eyes. She cast one quick look around to be sure of this, and then, going close to him, she put both her

hands on his shoulders. As she stood thus he realized for the first time how tall she was. Her eyes were almost on a level with his own.

"You're a dear boy," she said, quickly, and a little breathlessly. "You have made the day perfect, and I thank you. We shall not meet again, but I'd like to feel that you won't forget me, and I want you to tell me your first name."

He put his hands over hers.

"It's Philip," he said, simply, "and as for forgetting, you may be very sure I won't. This isn't the kind of thing one forgets, and you're not the kind of woman."

As he spoke the grip of her hands on his shoulders tightened, and she leaned forward and kissed him on the mouth. Under the suddenness and the surprise of it his senses whirled, but even in the chaos of the moment he was conscious of two conflicting impressions—the first, an odd disappointment in her, his friend; the second, an absurd resentment against the singular remoteness of those cool, soft lips that for an instant brushed his own. She gave him no chance to speak.

"I've left my gloves on the table," she said, crisply. "Get them."

He went without a word. When he returned

the vestibule was deserted. With a swift intuition of the truth he opened the door and rushed out into the street. She was not there, nor the cabman whom he had instructed to wait for them. She had slipped away, as she intended to do, and the kiss she had given him had been a farewell. He was left standing looking stupidly up and down the street, with her gloves in his hand and her purse, as he now remembered, in his pocket. Well, he could advertise that the next morning, in such a way that she could reclaim it without seeing him again if she wished. He could even seal it in an envelope and leave it at the *Herald* office, to be given to any one who would describe it. He walked slowly down Broadway and turned into the side street which held the house and the unattractive hall bedroom he called home. He felt "let down," as he would have put it, and horribly lonely and depressed. She was such a good sort, he reflected, and it was such a big pity she wouldn't let him see her again. He knew somehow that he never would. She was not a woman that changed her mind about things. Jove! but the whole experience had been interesting; and that kiss—that kiss he had been cad enough to misunderstand for an

instant.... The deepest blush of the day scorched his face as he recalled it.

Miss Stansbury arrived at the front entrance of her hotel at the same moment, and tersely instructed the driver to collect his fare at the desk. She entered the hall with him, and walked indifferently past the night clerk, answering with a nod the tacit question of that youth as he glanced from her to the cabman. She was not unconscious of the suppressed excitement in his manner nor of the elevator boy's relief as he joyfully greeted her appearance in his car. What did it matter? What did anything matter now? Her day was over.

Miss Manuel, already informed of her arrival by a hurried telephone message from the office, was waiting for her at the door of their apartment. She burst into tears as she put her arms around her patient and kissed her and led her inside.

"Oh, my dear, how *could* you?" she cried, reproachfully. "Think of the agonies I've been through. It's almost twelve o'clock."

The other woman did not look at her, nor did she return the caress. She walked into the room and sat down at her desk, with a strange appearance of haste, at which the nurse mar-

velled. Without waiting to take off her hat or coat, she seized a pen and paper and wrote these lines, marking them plainly:

PERSONAL

FOR INSERTION IN TO-MORROW'S "HERALD"

PHILIP.—The purse was purposely left with you. Its contents are yours.

She put this in an envelope and directed it to the *Herald* Advertising Department. Then, for the first time, she spoke to the nurse, balancing the envelope absently in her hand as she talked, and not looking once at the other's face. Her tones were level and monotonous, almost as if she were repeating a lesson.

"You need not have worried," she said, answering at last the nurse's first words. "I've had what I've wanted for years—a whole day to myself. I've done what I wanted to do. It's been worth while. But," she added, more slowly, "you needn't ask me about it, for I shall not tell you anything. Ring for a messenger, please. I want this taken to the *Herald* office at once; give him the money to pay for it."

In silence Miss Manuel obeyed. When the boy came she went into the hall to hand the envelope to him, glancing at the address as she did so. The instant she crossed the threshold Alice Stansbury slipped into the next room and opened a window looking down into a court. As she did so she whimpered like a frightened child.

"I must do it," she whispered. "I must—I must—now—now—now! If I wait, I won't—dare."

When the nurse entered the room there was only the open window to tell her what had happened. Panting, she leaned out and looked down with starting eyes. Far below, on the asphalt floor of the court, was a dark mass which moved once and then lay still.

The little clock on the table in the inner room struck twelve. Out in the hall the messenger whistled softly as he waited for the elevator. Hearing these familiar sounds, the nurse cast off the paralysis which had held her, and the silent corridor of the great hotel echoed her useless call for help.

IV

THE SIMPLE LIFE OF GENEVIEVE MAUD

GENEVIEVE MAUD reclined in a geranium-bed in an attitude of unstudied ease. On her fat body was a white dress, round her waist was a wide, blue sash, perched on one side of her head was a flaunting blue bow, and in her heart was bitterness. It was dimly comforting to lie down in all this finery, but it did not really help much. She brooded darkly upon her wrongs. They were numerous, and her cherubic little face took on additional gloom as she summed them up. First, she had been requested to be good—a suggestion always unwelcome to the haughty soul of Genevieve Maud, and doubly so this morning when she saw no alternative but to obey it. Secondly, there was no one to play with—a situation depressing to any companionable being, and grindingly so to one who considered all men her peers, all women her unquestioning slaves, and all animals grateful

ministers to her needs in lowlier fields of delight.

These delusions, it must be admitted, had been fostered during the four short but eventful years of Genevieve Maud's life. Her method of approach had been singularly compelling; old and young paused not to argue, but freely stripped themselves of adornments she fancied, and animals, from the kitten she carried round by one ear to the great St. Bernard she half strangled in recurring moments of endearment, bore with her adoringly, and humbly followed the trail of cake she left behind her when she tired of them and trotted off in search of fresh attractions. These were usually numerous; and had they been rarer, the ingenuity of Genevieve Maud would have been equal to the test. There were no social distinctions in her individual world. But one short year ago she had followed a hand-organ man and a monkey to a point safely distant from too-observant relatives and servants; there, beside the chattering monkey, she had sung and danced and scrambled for pennies and shaken a tambourine, and generally conducted herself like a *débutante* mænad.

That had been a glorious day. She recalled it now smoulderingly, resentfully. Different,

indeed, was the tragic present. No one to play with—that was bad enough. But there were still worse conditions. She was not even allowed to play by herself! Rover had been banished to a neighbor's, the kitten had been lent generously to the Joyce children, her human playmates had been warned off the premises, and Genevieve Maud had been urged to be a dear little girl and keep very, very quiet because mamma was sick. As if this was not enough, fate drove its relentless knife and gave it a final twist. Far back in a corner of the garden where she lay, almost hidden by the drooping branches of an old willow, sat her two sisters, Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret, highly superior beings of a stately dignity even beyond their ripe ages of eleven and nine years. They were too old to play with little girls, as they had frequently mentioned to Genevieve Maud, but they were not wholly beyond the power of her spell, and there had been occasions when they had so far forgotten themselves as to descend to her level and enjoy doll tea-parties and similar infantile pleasures. To-day, however, they were of a remoteness. Their plump backs were turned to her, their heads were close together, and on the soft afternoon breeze that floated over the

garden were borne sibilant whispers. They were telling each other secrets—secrets from which Genevieve Maud, by reason of her tender years, was irrevocably shut out.

Genevieve Maud sat up suddenly in the flower-bed as the full horror of this truth burst upon her, and then briskly entered into action designed to transform the peace and quiet of the scene. Her small, fat face turned purple, her big, brown eyes shut tight, her round mouth opened, and from the tiny aperture came a succession of shrieks which would have lulled a siren into abashed silence. The effect of this demonstration, rarely long delayed, was instantaneous now. A white-capped nurse came to an up-stairs window and shook her head warningly; the two small sisters rose and scurried across the lawn; a neighbor came to the hedge and clapped her hands softly, clucking mystic monosyllables supposed to be of a soothing nature; neighboring children within hearing assumed half-holiday expressions and started with a rush to the side of the blatant afflicted one. Surveying all this through half-shut eyes and hearing the steady tramp of the oncoming relief corps, an expression of triumphant content rested for an instant of Genevieve

Maud's face. Then she tied it up again into knots of even more disfiguring pattern, took another long breath, and apparently made an earnest effort to attract the attention of citizens of the next township. "I'm tired!" was the message Genevieve Maud sent to a sympathetic world on the wings of this megaphonic roar.

The trained nurse, who had rushed downstairs and into the garden, now reached her side and drastically checked Genevieve Maud's histrionism by spreading a spacious palm over the wide little mouth. With her other hand she hoisted Genevieve Maud from the flower-bed and escorted her to neutral ground on the lawn.

"'Tired!'" repeated the irate nurse, as the uproar subsided to gurgles. "Heavens! I should think you would be, after that!" Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret arrived simultaneously, and the older child took the situation and the infant in hand with her best imitation of her mother's manner.

"I am so sorry you were disturbed, Miss Wynne," she said, "and poor mamma, too. We will take care of Genevieve Maud, and she won't cry any more. We were just making some plans for her future," she ended, loftily.

The mouth of Genevieve Maud, stretched for

another yell, was arrested in its distension. Her small ears opened wide. Was she, after all, in the secret? It would seem so, for the nurse, seemingly satisfied, left the three children alone and went back to her patient, while Helen Adeline at once led her small sister to the choice retreat under the willow.

"We are going to talk to you, Genevieve Maud," she began, "ve-ry seriously, and we want you to pay 'tention and try to understand." This much was easy. Mamma usually opened her impressive addresses in such fashion.

"'Pay 'tention and try to understand," echoed Genevieve Maud, and grinned in joyful interest.

"Yes, really try," repeated Helen Adeline, firmly. Then, rather impatiently, and as one bearing with the painful limitations of the young, she went on:

"You're so little, Maudie, you see, you don't know; and you won't know even if we tell you. But you are a spoiled child; every one says so, and mamma said the other day that something should be done. She's sick, so she can't do it, but we can. We've got to take care of you, anyhow, so this is a good time. Now what it

really is, is a kind of game. Gracie and I will play it, and you are going to—to—well, you are going to be the game."

Genevieve Maud nodded solemnly, well satisfied. She was in it, anyhow. What mattered the petty details? "'Going to be the game,'" she echoed, as was her invariable custom, with the air of uttering an original thought.

Helen Adeline went on impressively.

"It's called the simple life," she said, "and grown-up folks are playing it now. I heard the minister an' mamma talking about it las' week for hours an' hours an' hours. They give up pomps an' vanerties, the minister says, an' they mus'n't have luxuries, an' they mus' live like nature an' save their souls. They can't save their souls when they have pomps an' vanerties. We thought we'd try it with you first, an' then if we like it—er—if it's nice, I mean, p'r'aps Grace an' I will, too. But mamma is sick, an' you've had too many things an' too much 'tention, so it's a good time for you to lead the simple life an' do without things."

Genevieve Maud, gazing into her sister's face with big, interested eyes, was vaguely, subconsciously aware that the new game might halt this side of perfect content; but she was of

an experimental turn and refrained from expressing any scepticism until she knew what was coming. In the mean time the eyes of her sister Grace Margaret had roamed disapprovingly over Genevieve Maud's white dress, the blue sash that begirded her middle, the rampant bow on her hair. Katie had put on all these things conscientiously, and had then joyfully freed her mind from the burden of thought of the child for the rest of the afternoon.

"Don't you think," Grace Margaret asked Helen Adeline, tentatively, "sashes an' bows is pomps?"

Helen Adeline gave the speaker a stolid, unexpressive glance. She acquiesced.

"Let's take 'em off," went on the younger and more practical spirit. "Then we won't never have to tie 'em for her, either, when they get loose."

They stripped Genevieve Maud, first of the sash and bows, then of the white gown, next of her soft undergarments, finally, as zeal waxed, even of her shoes and stockings. She stood before them clad in innocence and full of joyful expectation.

"All these fine clothes is pomps an' vanerties," remarked Helen Adeline, firmly. "The

minister said so when he was talking with mamma 'bout the simple life, an' Gracie and I listened. It was very interestin'."

She surveyed the innocent nudity of her little sister, "naked but not ashamed," with a speculative glance.

"Katie will be glad, won't she?" she reflected, aloud. "She says there's too much washing. Now she won't have to do any more for you. Don't you feel better an' happier without those pomps?" she asked Genevieve Maud.

That young person was already rolling on the grass, thrusting her little toes into the cool earth, exulting in her new-found sartorial emancipation. If this was the "new game," the new game was a winner. Grace Margaret, gazing doubtfully at her, was dimly conscious of an effect of incompleteness.

"I think she ought to have a hat," she murmured, at last. Helen Adeline was good-naturedly acquiescent.

"All right," she answered, cheerfully, "but not a pompy one. Papa's big straw will do." They found it and put it on the infant, whose eyes and face were thereby fortunately shaded from the hot glare of the August sun. Almost before it was on her head she had slipped away

and was running in and out of the shrubbery, her white body flashing among the leaves.

"We'll have our luncheon here," announced Helen Adeline, firmly, "an' I'll bring it out to save Katie trouble. Maudie can't have rich food, of course, 'cos she's livin' the simple life. We'll give her bread off a tin plate."

Grace Margaret looked startled.

"We haven't got any tin plate," she objected.

"Rover has."

Grace Margaret's eyes dropped suddenly, then rose and met her sister's. An unwilling admiration crept into them.

"How will Maudie learn nice table manners?" she protested, feebly. "Mamma says she must, you know."

"Folks don't have nice table manners when they're livin' simple lives," announced Helen Adeline, loftily. "They just eat. I guess we won't give her knives an' forks an' spoons, either."

Grace Margaret battled with temptation and weakly succumbed.

"Let's give her some of the rice pudding, though," she suggested. "It will be such fun to see her eat it, 'specially if it's very creamy!"

Of further details of that luncheon all three

children thereafter declined to speak. To Genevieve Maud the only point worthy of mention was that she had what the others had. This compromise effected, the manner of eating it was to her a detail of indescribable unimportance. What were knives, forks, spoons, or their lack, to Genevieve Maud? The tin plate was merely a gratifying novelty, and that she had been in close communion with rice pudding was eloquently testified by the samples of that delicacy which clung affectionately to her features and her fat person during the afternoon.

While they ate, Helen Adeline's active mind had been busy. She generously gave her sisters the benefit of its working without delay.

"She mus'n't have any money," she observed, thoughtfully, following with unseeing eyes the final careful polish the small tongue of Genevieve Maud was giving Rover's borrowed plate. "No one has money in the simple life, so we mus' take her bank an' get all the money out an'—"

"Spend it!" suggested Grace Margaret, rapturously, with her second inspiration. Helen Adeline reflected. The temptation was great, but at the back of her wise little head lay a dim foreboding as to the possible consequences.

"No," she finally decided, consistently. "I

guess it mus' be given to the poor. We'll break the bank an' take it out, an' Maudie can give it to the poor all by herself. Then if any one scolds, *she* did it! You'll enjoy that kind an' noble act, won't you, Maudie?" she added, in her stateliest grown-up manner.

Maudie decided that she would, and promptly corroborated Helen Adeline's impression. The soft August breeze fanned her body, the grass was cool and fresh under her feet, and her little stomach looked as if modelled from a football by her ample luncheon. She was to be the central figure in the distribution of her wealth, and wisdom beyond her own would burden itself with the insignificant details. Genevieve Maud, getting together the material for large and slushy mud pies, sang blithely to herself, and found the simple life its own reward.

"We'll leave her with her dolls," continued Helen Adeline, "an' we'll hunt up deservin' poor. Then we'll bring 'em here an' Maudie can give 'em all she has. But first"—her little sharp eyes rested discontentedly upon Genevieve Maud's family—six dolls reposing in a blissful row in a pansy-bed—"first we mus' remove *those* pomps an' vanerties."

Grace gasped.

"Take away the dolls?" she ejaculated, dizzily.

"No, not edzactly. Jus' take off all their clothes. Don't you think it looks silly for them to have clothes on when Maudie hasn't any?"

Grace Margaret agreed that it did, and at once the mistake was rectified, the clothing was added to the heap of Genevieve Maud's garments, and a pleasing effect of harmony reigned. The little girls regarded it with innocent satisfaction.

"I s'pose we couldn't really take her dolls," reflected Helen Adeline, aloud. "She'd make an awful fuss, an' she's so good an' quiet now it's a pity to start her off. But her toys *mus'* go. They're very expensive, an' they're pomps an' vanerties, I know. So we'll take 'em with us an' give 'em to poor children."

"You think of lots of things, don't you?" gurgled Grace Margaret, with warm admiration. Her sister accepted the tribute modestly, as no more than her due. Leaving Genevieve Maud happy with her mud pies and her stripped dolls, the two sought the nursery and there made a discriminating collection of her choicest treasures. Her Noah's Ark, her picture-books,

her colored balls and blocks, her woolly lambs that moved on wheels, her miniature croquet set, all fell into their ruthless young hands and, as a crowning crime, were dumped into the little go-cart that was the very apple of Genevieve Maud's round eyes. It squeaked under its burden as the children drew it carefully along the hall. They carried it down-stairs with exaggerated caution, but Genevieve Maud saw it from afar, and, deeply moved by their thoughtfulness, approached with gurgles of selfish appreciation. The conspirators exchanged glances of despair. It was the intrepid spirit of Helen Adeline that coped with the distressing situation. Sitting down before her victim, she took Maudie's reluctant hands in hers and gazed deep into her eyes as mamma was wont to gaze into hers on the various occasions when serious talks became necessary.

"Now, Genevieve Maud," she began, "you mus' listen an' you mus' mind, or you can't play. Ain't you havin' a good time? If you don't want to do what we say, we'll put your clothes right straight on again an' leave you in the midst of your pomps an' vanerties: an' then — what 'll become of your soul?" She paused impressively to allow this vital ques-

tion to make its full appeal. Genevieve Maud writhed and squirmed.

"But," continued Helen Adeline, solemnly, "if you do jus' as we say, we'll let you play some more." The larger issue was temporarily lost sight of this time, but the one presented seemed to appeal vividly to Genevieve Maud.

"Let Genevieve Maud play some more," she wheedled.

"And will you do everything we say?"

"Do everything you say," promised Genevieve Maud, recklessly.

"Very well,"—this with a fidelity in its imitation to her mother's manner which would have convulsed that admirable and long-suffering woman could she have heard it. "An' first of all we mus' give away your toys to poor children."

The mouth of Genevieve Maud opened. Helen Adeline held up a warning hand, and it shut.

"They're *pomps*," repeated the older sister, positively, "an' we'll bring you simple toys if poor children will exchange with us."

This was at least extenuating. Genevieve Maud hesitated and sniffed. In the matter of being stripped, toys were more important than clothes.

"If you don't, you know, you can't play," Grace Margaret reminded her.

"Awright," remarked Genevieve Maud, briefly. "Give toys to poor chil'ren."

They hurriedly left her before her noble purpose could do so, and Genevieve Maud, left to her own resources, made unctuous mud pies and fed them to her family. Grace Margaret and Helen Adeline returned in triumph within the hour and laid at the feet of their small victim modest offerings consisting of one armless rubber doll, one dirty and badly torn picture-book, and one top, broken.

"These is simple," declared Helen Adeline, with truth, "an' the poor Murphy children has your pomps, Maudie. Are you glad?"

Genevieve Maud, surveying doubtfully the nondescript collection before her, murmured without visible enthusiasm something which was interpreted as meaning that she was glad. As a matter of fact, the charm of the simple life was not borne in upon her compellingly. The top she accepted until she discovered that it would not go. The rubber doll she declined to touch until Grace Margaret sugggested that it had been in a hospital and had had its arms amputated like Mrs. Clark's son Charlie. Deep-

ly moved by the pathos of this tragic fate, Genevieve Maud added the rubber doll to her aristocratic family, whose members seemed to shrink aside as it fell among them. The picture-book she declined to touch at all.

"It's dirty," she remarked, with an air of finality which effectually closed the discussion. By this time she was not herself an especially effective monument of cleanliness. The rice pudding and the mud pies had combined to produce a somewhat bizarre effect, and the dirt she had casually gathered from the paths, the flower-beds, and the hedges enlivened but did not improve the ensemble.

"She ought to be washed pretty soon," suggested Grace, surveying her critically; but to this tacit criticism Helen Adeline promptly took exception.

"They don't have to, so much," she objected, "when it's the simple life. That's one of the nice things."

With this decision Genevieve Maud was well content. Her tender years forbade hair-splitting and subtle distinctions; the term "accumulated dirt" or "old dirt" had no significance for her. She could not have told why she rejected the Murphy child's thoroughly grimed picture-

book, yet herself rolled happily about in a thin coating of mud and dust, but she did both instinctively.

Her attention was pleasantly distracted by subdued cries from the street beyond the garden hedge. Three Italian women, all old, stood there gesticulating freely and signalling to the children, and a small ragged boy on crutches hovered nervously near them. Helen Adeline jumped to her feet with a sudden exclamation.

"It's the poor!" she said, excitedly. "For your money, Genevieve Maud. I told them to come. Get the bank, Gracie, an' she mus' give it all away!"

Grace departed promptly on her errand, but there was some delay in opening the bank when she returned—an interval filled pleasantly by the visitors with interested scrutiny of the shameless Genevieve Maud, whose airy unconsciousness of her unconventional appearance uniquely attested her youth. When the money finally came, rolling out in pennies, five-cent pieces, and rare dimes, the look of good-natured wonder in the old black eyes peering wolfishly over the hedge changed quickly to one of keen cupidity, but the children saw nothing of this.

Helen Adeline divided the money as evenly as she could into four little heaps.

"It's all she has," she explained, grandly, "so she's got to give it all to you, 'cos riches is pomps an' ruins souls. Give it, Genevieve Maud," she continued, magnanimously surrendering the centre of the stage to the novice in the simple life.

Genevieve Maud handed it over with a fat and dirty little paw, and the women and the lame boy took it uncritically, with words of thanks and even with friendly smiles. Strangely enough, there was no quarrelling among themselves over the distribution of the spoils. For one golden moment they were touched and softened by the gift of the baby hand that gave its all so generously. Then the wisdom of a speedy disappearance struck them and they faded away, leaving the quiet street again deserted. Helen Adeline drew a long breath as the bright gleam of their kerchiefs disappeared around a corner.

"That's nice," she exclaimed, contentedly. "Now what else can we make her do?"

The two pair of eyes rested meditatively on the unconscious little sister, again lost to her surroundings in the construction of her twenty-

third mud pie. Not even the surrender of her fortune beguiled her from this unleavened joy of the simple life. "We've made her do 'mos' everything, I guess," admitted Grace Margaret, with evident reluctance. It appeared so, indeed. Stripped of her clothing, her money and her toys, it would seem that little in the way of earthly possessions was left to Genevieve Maud; but even as they looked again, Grace Margaret had another inspiration.

"Don't they work when they have simple lives?" she asked, abruptly.

"'Course they work."

"Then let's have Genevieve Maud do our work."

There was silence for a moment—silence filled with the soul-satisfying enjoyment of a noble conception.

"Grace Margaret Davenport," said Helen, solemnly, "you're a smart girl!" She exhaled a happy sigh, and added: "'Course we'll let her! She mus' work. She can water the geraniums for you an' the pansies for me, an' gather up the croquet things for me an' take them in, an' fill Rover's water-basin, an' get seed for the birds, an' pick up all the paper an' leaves on the lawn."

It is to be deplored that the active and even strenuous life thus outlined did not for the moment appeal to Genevieve Maud when they brought its attractions to her attention. The afternoon was fading, and Genevieve Maud was beginning to fade, too; her little feet were tired, and her fat legs seemed to curve more in her weariness of well-doing; but the awful threat of being left out of the game still held, and she struggled bravely with her task, while the two arch-conspirators reposed languidly and surveyed her efforts from beneath the willow-tree.

"It'll be her bedtime pretty soon," suggested Helen Adeline, the suspicion of a guilty conscience lurking in the remark. "She can have her bread and milk like she always does—that's simple 'nuff. But do you think she ought to sleep in that handsome brass crib?"

Grace Margaret did not think so, but she was sadly puzzled to find a substitute.

"Mamma won't let her sleep anywhere else, either," she pointed out.

"Mamma won't know."

"Annie or Katie will know—p'r'aps."

The "p'r'aps" was tentative. Annie and Katie had taken full advantage of the liberty

attending the illness of their mistress, and their policy with the children was one of masterly inactivity. So long as the little girls were quiet they were presumably good, and hence, to a surety, undisturbed. Still, it is hardly possible that even their carelessness would fail to take account of Genevieve Maud's unoccupied bed, if unoccupied it proved to be.

"An' cert'inly papa will know."

Helen Adeline's last hope died with this sudden reminder. She sighed. Of course papa would come to kiss his chicks good-night, but that was hours hence. Much could be done in those hours. Her problem was suddenly simplified, for even as she bent her brows and pondered, Grace Margaret called her attention to an alluring picture behind her. Under the shelter of a blossoming white hydrangea lay Genevieve Maud fast asleep. It was a dirty and an exhausted Genevieve Maud, worn with the heat and toil of the day, scratched by bush and brier, but wonderfully appealing in her helplessness—so appealing, that Helen Adeline's heart yearned over her. She conquered the momentary weakness.

"*I* think," she suggested, casually, "she ought to sleep in the barn."

Grace Margaret gasped.

"It ain't a simple life sleepin' in lovely gardens," continued the authority, with simple but thrilling conviction. "An'—wasn't the Infant Jesus born in barns?"

Grace Margaret essayed a faint protest.

"Papa won't like it," she began, feebly.

"He won't know. 'Course we won't let her *stay* there! But just a little while, to make it finish right—the way it ought to be."

The holding up of such lofty ideals of consistency conquered Grace Margaret—so thoroughly, in fact, that she helped to carry the sleeping Genevieve Maud not only to the barn, but even, in a glorious inspiration, to Rover's kennel—a roomy habitation and beautifully clean. The pair deposited the still sleeping innocent there and stepped back to survey the effect. Helen Adeline drew a long breath of satisfaction. "Well," she said, with the content of an artist surveying the perfect work, "if that ain't simple lives, I don't know what is!"

They stole out of the place and into the house. The shadows lengthened on the floor of the big barn, and the voices of the children in the street beyond grew fainter and finally died away.

Lights began to twinkle in neighboring windows. Rover, returning from his friendly visit, sought his home, approached its entrance confidently, and retreated with a low growl. The baby slept on, and the dog, finally recognizing his playmate, stretched himself before the entrance of his kennel and loyally mounted guard, with a puzzled look in his faithful brown eyes. The older children, lost in agreeable conversation and the attractions of baked apples and milk toast, wholly forgot Genevieve Maud and the flying hours.

It was almost dark when their father came home and, after a visit to the bedside of his wife, looked to the welfare of his children. The expression on the faces of the two older ones as they suddenly grasped the fact of his presence explained in part the absence of the third. Mr. Davenport had enjoyed the advantages of eleven years of daily association with his daughter Helen Adeline.

"Where is she?" he asked, briefly, with a slight prickling of the scalp.

In solemn procession, in their night-gowns. they led him to her side; and the peace of the perfumed night as they passed through the garden was broken with explanations and mutual re-

criminations and expressions of unavailing regret. Rover rose as they approached and looked up into his master's eyes, wagging his tail in eager welcome.

"Here she is," he seemed to say. "It's all right. *I* looked after her."

The father's eyes grew dim as he patted the dog's fine head and lifted the naked body of his youngest daughter in his arms. Her little body was cold, and she shivered as she awoke and looked at him. Then she gazed down into the conscience-stricken faces of her sisters and memory returned. It drew from her one of her rare spontaneous remarks.

"Don't yike simple yives," announced Genevieve Maud, with considerable firmness. "Don't yant to play any more."

"You shall not, my babykins," promised her father, huskily. "No more simple life for Genevieve Maud, you may be sure."

Later, after the hot bath and the supper which both her father and the trained nurse had supervised, Genevieve Maud was tucked cozily away in the little brass crib which had earlier drawn out the stern disapproval of her sisters. Her round face shone with cold cream. A silver mug, full of milk, stood beside her

crib, on her suggestion that she might become "firsty" during the night. Finding the occasion one of unlimited indulgence and concession, she had demanded and secured the privilege of wearing her best night-gown—one resplendent with a large pink bow. In her hand she clasped a fat cookie.

Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret surveyed this sybaritic scene from the outer darkness of the hall.

"Look at her poor, perishin' body full of comforts," sighed Helen Adeline, dismally. Then, with concentrated bitterness, "I s'pose we'll never dare to even *think* 'bout her soul again!"

V

HIS BOY

CAPTAIN ARTHUR HAMILTON, of the ——th Infantry, moved on his narrow cot, groaned partly from irritation and partly from pain, muttered a few inaudible words, and looked with strong disapproval toward the opening of the hospital tent in which he lay. Through it came the soft breezes of the Cuban night, a glimpse of brilliantly starred horizon-line, and the cheerful voice of Private Kelly, raised in song. The words came distinctly to the helpless officer's reluctant ears.

"'Oh, Liza, de-ar Liza,'" carolled Kelly, in buoyant response to the beauty of the evening.

Captain Hamilton muttered again as he suppressed a seductive desire to throw something at the Irishman's head, silhouetted against the sky as he limped past the entrance. Six weeks had elapsed since the battle of San Juan, in which Hamilton and Kelly had been among

the many grievously hurt. Kelly, witness this needless service of song, was already convalescent. He could wander from tent to tent in well-meaning but futile efforts to cheer less fortunate mates. Baker was around again, too, Hamilton remembered, and Barnard and Hallenbeck and Lee, and—oh, hosts of others. He ran over their names as he had done countless times before in the long days and nights which had passed since he had been "out of it all," as he put it to himself. He alone, of his fellow officers in the regiment, still lay chained to his wretched cot, a very log of helplessness, in which a fiery spirit flamed and consumed. His was not a nature that took gracefully to inactivity; and of late it had been borne in upon him with a cold, sickening sense of fear, new, like his helplessness, that inactivity must be his portion for a long, long time to come. At first the thought had touched his consciousness only at wide intervals, but now it was becoming a constant, lurking horror, always with him, or just within reach, ready to spring.

He was "out of it all," not for weeks or even for months, but very possibly for all time. The doctor's reticence told him this; so did his own sick heart; so did the dutiful cheerfulness of

his men and his brother officers. They overdid it, he realized, and the efforts they so conscientiously made showed how deep their sympathy must be, and how tragic the cause of it. His lips twisted sardonically as he remembered their optimistic predictions of his immediate recovery and the tributes they paid to his courage in the field. It was true he had distinguished himself in action (by chance, he assured himself and them), and he had figured as a hero in the subsequent reports of the battle. But the other fellows would hardly have bothered to have a trifle like that mentioned, he told himself, if the little glowing badge of fame he carried off the field had not been now his sole possession. He had given more than his life for it. He had sacrificed his career, his place in the active ranks, his perfect, athletic body. His life would have been a simple gift in comparison. Why couldn't it have been taken? he wondered for the hundredth time. Why could not he, like others, have died gloriously and been laid away with the flag wrapped round him? But that, he reflected, bitterly, would have been too much luck. Instead, he must drag on and on and on, of no use to himself or to any one else.

Again and again he contemplated the dreary outlook, checking off mentally the details of the past, the depressing experiences to come, the hopelessness of it all; and as his mind swung wearily round the small circle he despised himself for the futility of the whole mental process, and for his inability to fix his thoughts on things other than his own misfortune. A man paralyzed; a thing dead from the waist down—that was what he had become. He groaned again as the realization gnawed at his soul, and at the sound a white-capped nurse rose from a table where she had been sitting and came to his bedside with a smile of professional cheerfulness. She had a tired, worn face, and faded blue eyes, which looked as if they had seen too much of human suffering. But an indomitable spirit gazed out of them, and spoke, too, in her alert step and in the fine poise of her head and shoulders.

"Your mail has come," she told him, "and there seem to be some nice letters—fat ones. One, from Russia, has a gold crown on the envelope. Perhaps I had better leave you alone while you read it."

Hamilton smiled grimly as he held out a languid hand. He liked Miss Foster. She was

a good sort, and she had stood by the boys nobly through the awful days after the fight. He liked her humor, too, though he sometimes had suspicions as to its spontaneity. Then his eye fell on the top envelope of the little package she had given him, and at the sight of the handwriting he caught his breath, and the blood rushed suddenly to his face. He closed his eyes for a moment in an effort to pull himself together. Did he still care, after ten years, and like that! But possibly, very probably, it was merely a manifestation of his wretched weakness, which could not endure even a pleasant surprise without these absurd physical effects. He remembered, with a more cheerful grin, that he had hardly thought of her at all during the past year. Preparations for war and his small part in them had absorbed him heart and soul. He opened the letter without further self-analysis, and read with deepening interest the closely written lines on the thin foreign paper, whose left-hand corner held a duplicate of the gold crown on the envelope.

"DEAR OLD FRIEND,—You have forgotten me, no doubt, in all these years. Ten, is it not? But I have not forgotten you, nor my other friends in America, exile though I am and oblivious though I may have

seemed. I do not know quite why I have not come home for a visit long before this. Indeed, I have planned to do so from year to year, but a full life and many varied interests have deferred the journey one way or another. I have three boys—nine, seven, and five—and it would be difficult to bring them with me and impossible to leave them behind. So, you see—

"But my heart often longs for my native land, and in one tower of this old castle I have a great room full of souvenirs of home. It is the spot I love best in my new country. Here I read my mail and write my letters and follow American news in the newspapers friends send me. Here, with my boys tumbling over each other before the fireplace, I read of the ascent of San Juan Hill, and of you, my friend, and your splendid courage, and your injury.

"No doubt by the time this letter reaches you you will be well again, and in no need of my sympathy. But you will let me tell you how proud of you I am.

"I read the newspaper accounts to my boys, who were greatly interested and impressed when they learned that mamma knew the hero. I was much amused by the youngest, Charlie—too small, I thought, to understand it all. But he stood before me with his hands on my knees and his big brown eyes on my face; and when I finished reading he asked many questions about the war and about you. He is the most American of my children, and loves to hear of his mother's country. After the others had gone he cuddled down in my lap and demanded the 'story' repeated in full; and when I described again the magnificent way in which you saved your men, he said, firmly, 'I am *his* boy.'

"I thought you might be interested in this unsought, spontaneous tribute, and my purpose in writing is to pass it on to you—though I admit it has taken me a long time to get 'round to it!

"You will forgive this rambling letter, and you will believe me, now as ever,

"Sincerely your friend,

"MARGARET CHALLONER VALDRONOVNA."

Hamilton slowly refolded the letter and returned it to its envelope, letting the solace of its sweet friendliness sink into his sore heart the while. She had not wholly forgotten him, then, this beautiful woman he had loved and who had given him a gracious and charming *camaraderie* in return for the devotion of his life. He had not been senseless enough to misconstrue her feeling, so he had never spoken; and she, after two brilliant Washington seasons, had married a great Russian noble and sailed away without suspecting, he felt sure, what she was to him. He had recovered, as men do, but he had not loved again, nor had he married. He wondered if she knew. Very probably; for the newspapers which devoted so much space to his achievements had added detailed biographical sketches, over which he had winced from instinctive distaste of such intimate discussion of his personal affairs. The earlier re-

ports (evidently the ones she had read) had published misleading accounts of his injuries. They were serious, but not dangerous, according to these authorities. It was only recently that rumors of his true condition had begun to creep into print. The Princess had not read these. Hamilton was glad of that.

He recalled dreamily the different passages of her letter, the remainder of his mail lying neglected on his bed. That boy—her boy—*his* boy. He smiled to himself, at first with amusement, then with a sudden tenderness that pleasantly softened his stern lips. He was weak enough, frightened enough, lonely enough, to grasp with an actual pitiful throb of the heart this tiny hand stretched out to him across the sea. He liked that boy—*his* boy. He must be a fine fellow. He wondered idly how he looked. "Three boys—nine, seven, five"—yes, Charlie was five and had great brown eyes. Like his mother's, the stricken man remembered. She had brown eyes—and such brown eyes. Such kind, friendly, womanly brown eyes — true mirrors of the strong soul that looked from them. Something hot and wet stung the surface of Hamilton's cheek. He

touched it unsuspectingly, and then swore alone in deep, frank self-disgust.

"Well, of all the sentimental idiots!" he muttered. "My nerves are in a nice way, when I bawl like a baby because some one sends me a friendly letter. Guess I'll answer it."

Miss Foster brought him pen, ink, and paper, and he began, writing with some difficulty, as he lay flat on his back.

"My dear Princess,—Your letter has just reached me, and you cannot, I am sure, imagine the cheer and comfort it brought. I am still lingering unwillingly on the sick-list, but there is some talk now of shipping me north on the *Relief* next week, when I hope to give a better account of myself. In the mean time, and after, I shall think much of you and the boys, especially of the youngest and his flattering adoption of me. I am already insufferably proud of that, and rather sentimental as well, as you will see by the fact that I want his photograph! Will you send it to me, in care of the Morton Trust Company, New York? I do not yet know just where I shall be.

"There is a pleasant revelation of well-being and happiness between the lines of your letter. Believe me, I rejoice in both.

"Faithfully yours,

"Arthur Hamilton."

As he read it over the letter seemed curt and unsatisfactory, but he was already exhausted

and had not the strength to make another effort. So he wearily sealed and addressed it, and gave it to Miss Foster for the next mail. Her tired eyes widened a little as she artlessly read the inscription.

During the seemingly endless days and nights that followed, Hamilton battled manfully but despairingly with his sick soul. Wherever he looked there was blackness, lightened once or twice, and for an instant only, by a sudden passing memory of a little child. It would be too much to say that the memory comforted him. Nothing could do that, yet. All he dared hope for was for the strength to go through his ordeal with something approaching manliness and dignity. The visits of his friends were a strain to him, as well as to them, and it was sadly easy to see how the sense of his hopeless case depressed them. He could imagine the long breath they drew as they left his tent and found themselves again in the rich, warm, healthy world. He did not blame them. In their places, he would no doubt have felt just the same. But he was inevitably driven more and more into himself, and in his dogged efforts to get away from self-centred thought he turned with a sturdy determination to fancies

about remote things, and especially to imaginings of the boy—the little fellow who loved him, and who, thank God, was not as yet "sorry for him!" Oddly enough, the mother seemed to have taken her place in the background of Hamilton's thoughts. It was her son who appealed to him—the innocent man-child, half American, half Russian, entering so happily and unconsciously on the enhanced uncertainties of life in the tragic land of his birth.

During the trying, stormy voyage north on the great hospital ship, Hamilton had strange, half-waking visions of a curly headed lad with brown eyes, tumbling over a bear-skin rug in front of a great fireplace, or standing at his mother's knee looking into her face as she talked of America and of an American soldier. He began to fancy that the vision held at bay the other crowding horrors which lay in wait. If he could keep his mind on that he was safe. He was glad the mother and son could not, in their turn, picture him—as he was.

When the photographs arrived, soon after he reached New York, the helpless officer opened the bulky package with eager fingers. There were two "cabinets," both of the child. One

showed him at the tender age of two, a plump, dimpled, beautiful baby, airily clad in an embroidered towel. The second was apparently quite recent. A five-year-old boy, in black velvet and a bewildering expanse of lace collar, looked straight out of the picture with tragic dark eyes, whose direct glance was so like his mother's that ten years seemed suddenly obliterated as Hamilton returned their gaze. With these was a little letter on a child's note-paper, in printed characters which reeled drunkenly down the page from left to right. Hamilton read it with a chuckle.

"DEAR CAPTAIN HAMILTON,—I love you very much. I love you becos you fought in the war. I have your picture. I have put a candle befront of your picture. The candle is burning. I love you very much. Your boy,

"CHARLIE."

Accompanying this epistolary masterpiece was a brief note from the writer's mother, explaining that the "picture" of Captain Hamilton, of whose possession her infant boasted, had been cut from an illustrated newspaper and pasted on stiff card-board in gratification of the child's whim.

"He insists on burning a candle before it,"

she wrote, "evidently from some dim association with tapers and altars and the rest. As it is all a new manifestation of his character, we are indulging him freely. Certainly it can do him no harm to love and admire a brave man. Besides, to have a candle burned for you! Is not that a new flutter of glory?"

Hamilton, still in the grasp of a dumb depression he would voice to no one, was a little amused and more touched. In his hideous loneliness and terror the pretty incident, one he would have smiled at and forgotten a year ago, took on an interest out of all proportion to its importance. He felt a sudden, unaccountable sense of pleasant companionship. The child became a loved personality—the one human, close, vital thing in a world over which there seemed to hang a thick black fog through which Hamilton vaguely, wretchedly groped. He himself did not know why the child interested him so keenly, nor did he try to analyze the fact. He was merely grateful for it, and for the other fact that he cherished no sentimental feeling for the boy's mother. That had passed out of his life as everything else had seemingly passed which belonged to the old order of things. He had always been a calm, reserved,

self-absorbed, unemotional type of man, glorying a little, perhaps, in his lack of dependence on human kind. In his need he had turned to his fellows and turned in vain. Now that a precious thing had come to him unsought, he did not intend to lose it.

Through his physicians he pulled various journalistic wires, resulting in the suppression, in the newspapers, of the hopeless facts of his case. He did not intend, he decided, to have his boy think of him as tied to an invalid's couch. Then, knowing something of human nature, and of the evanescent character of childish fancies, he ordered shipped to Russia a variety of American mechanical toys, calculated to swell the proud bosom of the small boy who received them. This shameless bid for continued favor met with immediate success. An ecstatic, incoherent little shriek of delight came from the land of the czar in the form of another letter; and the candle, which quite possibly would have burned low or even gone out, blazed up cheerily again.

That was the beginning of an intercourse which interested and diverted Hamilton for months. He spared no pains to adapt his letters to the interest and comprehension of

his small correspondent, and he derived a quite incredible amount of satisfaction from the childish scrawls which came to him in reply. They were wholly babyish documents, about the donkey, the nurse, the toys, and games of the small boy's daily life. Usually they were written in his own printed letters. Sometimes they were dictated to his mother, who faithfully reported every weighty word that fell from the infant's lips. But always they were full of the hero-worship of the little child for the big, strong, American fighting-man; and in every letter, sometimes in the beginning, sometimes at the end, occasionally in both places, as the enthusiasm of the writer waxed, was the satisfying assurance, "*I am your boy.*" Hamilton's eyes raced over the little pages till he found that line, and there rested contentedly.

As the months passed, the healing influence of time wrought its effects. Hamilton, shut in though he was, adapted himself to the narrow world of an invalid's room and its few interests. With the wealth he had fortunately inherited he brought to his side leading specialists who might possibly help him, and went through alternate ecstatic hopes and abysmal fears as the great men came and departed. Very quiet-

ly, too, he helped others less fortunate, financially, than himself. The nurses and physicians in the hospital where he lay learned to like and admire him, and other patients, convalescents or new-comers who were able to move about, sought his cheerful rooms and brought into them a whiff of the outside world. Through it all, winding in and out of the neutral-colored weeks like a scarlet thread of life and hope, came the childish letters from Russia, and each week a thick letter went back, artfully designed to keep alive the love and interest of an imaginative little boy.

At the end of six months young Charles fell from his donkey and broke his left arm, but this trivial incident was not allowed to interfere with the gratifying regularity with which his letters arrived. It was, however, interesting, as throwing a high light on the place his American hero held in the child's fancy. His mother touched on this in her letter describing the accident.

"The arm had to be set at once," she wrote, "and of course it was very painful. But I told Charlie you would be greatly disappointed if your boy were not brave and did not obey the doctor. He saw the force of this immediately,

and did not shed a tear, though his dear little face was white and drawn with pain."

Master Charlie himself discussed the same pleasant incident in the first letter he dictated after the episode.

"I did not cry," he mentioned, with natural satisfaction. "Mamma cried, and Sonya cried. Men do not cry. Do they? You did not cry when you were hurt, did you? I am going to be just like you."

Hamilton laughed over the letter, his pale cheek flushing a little at the same time. He *had* cried, once or twice; he recalled it now with shame. He must try to do better, remembering that he loomed large as a heroic model for the young.

He was still reading the little letter when Dr. Van Buren, his classmate at the Point, his one intimate since then, and his physician now, entered the room, greeted him curtly, and stood at the window for a moment, drumming his fingers fiercely against the pane. Hamilton knew the symptoms; Van Buren was nervous and worried about something. He dropped the small envelope into his lap and looked up.

"Well?" he said, tersely.

Van Buren did not answer for a moment. Then he turned, crossed the room abruptly, and sat down near the reclining-chair in which the officer spent his days. The physician's face was strained and pale. His glance, usually direct, shifted and fell under his friend's inquiring gaze.

"Well?" repeated the latter, compellingly. "I suppose you fellows have been talking me over again. What's the outcome?"

Van Buren cleared his throat.

"Yes, we—we have, old man," he began, rather huskily—"in there, you know." He indicated the direction of the consulting-room as he spoke. "We don't like the recent symptoms."

Unconsciously, Hamilton straightened his shoulders.

"Out with it. Don't mince matters, Frank. Do you think life is so precious a thing to me that I can't part with it if I've got to?"

Van Buren writhed in his chair.

"It isn't that," he said, "life or death. It's wor—I mean, it's different. It's—it's these." He laid his hand on the officer's helpless legs, stretched out stiffly under a gay red afghan. "God!" he broke out, suddenly, "I don't know

how you'll take it, old chap; and there's no sense in trying to break a thing like this gently. We're afraid—we think—they'll—have to come off!"

Under the shock of it Hamilton set his teeth.

"Why?" he asked, quietly.

"Because — well, because they're no good. They're dead. They're a constant menace to you. A scratch or injury of any kind—they've got to go—that's all, Arthur. But we've been talking it over and we can fix you up so you can get about and be much better off than you are now." He leaned forward as he spoke, and his words came quickly and eagerly. The worst was over; he was ready to picture the other side. Hamilton stopped him with a gesture.

"Suppose I decline to let them go?" he asked, grimly.

Van Buren stared at him.

"You can't!" he stammered.

"Why not?"

"Because—why, because your life depends on their coming off!"

Hamilton's lips set.

"My *life!*" he repeated. "My precious, glad, young life! So full of happiness! So useful!" He dropped the savagely bitter tone suddenly.

"No, Frank," he said, quietly, "I won't go through life as the half of a man. I'll let the thing take its course; or if that will be too slow and too—horrible, I'll help the hobbling beast on its way. I think I'd be justified. It's too much to ask—you know it—to be hoisted through life as a remnant."

Van Buren rose, moved his chair nearer to Hamilton's, and sat down close to his friend's side. All nervousness had left him. He was again cool, scientific, professional; but with it all there was the deep sympathy and understanding of a friend.

"No, you won't," he said, firmly; "you won't do anything of the kind, and I'll tell you why you won't. Because it isn't in your make-up to play the coward. That's why. You've got to go through with it and take what comes, and do it all like the strong chap you are. If you think there won't be anything left in life, you are mistaken. You can be of a lot of use; you can do a lot of good. You will have time and inclination and money. You will be able to get around, not as quickly, but as surely. With a good man-servant you'll be entirely independent of drafts on charity or pity. Money has some beautiful uses. If you were a poor

devil who hadn't a cent in the world and would be dependent on the grudging service of others, I should wish you to accept and bear, perhaps, but I could not urge you to. Now, your life is helpful to others. You can give and aid and bless. You can be a greater hero than the man who went up San Juan Hill, and there are those who will feel it."

"That is, my money is needed, and because I've got it I should drag out years of misery while I spread little financial poultices on other people's ills," returned Hamilton. "No, thanks; it's not enough good. They can have the money just the same. That can be amputated with profit to all concerned. I'll leave it to hospitals and homes for the helpless, especially for fractional humanity—needy remnants. But I decline absolutely, once and for all, to accept the noble future you have outlined. I grant you it would be heroic. But have you ever heard of great heroism with no stimulus to arouse it?"

He raised his hand as he spoke, and brought it down with a gesture of finality. As it fell, it dropped on the little letter. Mechancially, his fingers closed on it.

His boy! His brave little boy who had not flinched or cried, because he meant to be just

like Captain Hamilton. What would *he* think when the truth came to him years hence, as it must do. What would she think now, the mother who was glad that her son should "love and admire a brave man"? The small missive was a stimulus.

Hamilton turned to Van Buren again, checking with a little shake of the head the impetuous speech that rushed to that gentleman's lips.

"Just wait one moment," he said, thoughtfully. He leaned back and shut his eyes, and as he did so the familiar scene of months past came suddenly before them—the quaint old foreign room, the great fireplace with its blazing logs, the mother, the curly haired boy. His life had been a lonely one, always, Hamilton reflected. Few, pathetically few, so far as he knew, would be affected by its continuance or its end. But the *manner* of its end—that was a different matter. That might touch individuals far and wide by its tragic example to other desperate souls. Still, he was not their keeper. As for Charlie—

Ah, *Charlie!* Charlie, with his childish but utter hero-worship; Charlie, with his lighted candle; Charlie, with his small-boy love and trust—Charlie would be told some little story

and Charlie would soon forget. But—what would Charlie think of him some day when the truth was out—Charlie who at five could set his teeth and bear pain stoically because his hero did! Because he was "His Boy!" Hamilton's mind returned to that problem again and again and lingered there. No, he could not disappoint Charlie. Besides, Van Buren was right. There was work, creditable work to do. And to be plucky, even if only to keep a brave little chap's ideal intact, to maintain its helpful activity, was something worthy of a stanch man. Would he wish his boy to go under when the strain against the right thing was crushing?

He laid the letter down gently, deliberately, turned to his friend, and smiled as Van Buren had not seen him smile since their ingenuous boyhood days. There was that sweetness in the smile which homage to woman makes us dub "feminine," and something of it, too, in the way he laid his hand on his chum's shoulder.

"All right, old sawbones," he said, slowly. "You may do whatever has to be done. I'll face the music. Unbuilding one man may build up another."

VI

THE COMMUNITY'S SUNBEAM

MISS CLARKSON looked at the small boy, and the small boy looked back at Miss Clarkson with round, unwinking eyes. In the woman's glance were sympathy and a puzzled wonder; the child's gaze expressed only a calm and complete detachment. Subtly, but unmistakably, he succeeded in conveying the impression that he regarded this human object before him because it was in his line of vision, but that he found no interest in it, nor good reason for assuming an interest he did not feel: that if, indeed, he was conscious of any emotion at all, it was in the nature of a vaguely dawning desire that the object should remove itself, should cease to shut off the view from the one window of the tenement room that was his home. But it really did not matter much. Already, in his seven years of life, the small boy had decided that nothing really mattered

much, and his dark, grim little face, with its deep-cut, unchildish lines, bore witness to the unwavering strength of this conviction. If the object preferred to stay— He settled himself more firmly on the rickety chair he occupied, crossed his feet with infinite care, and continued to regard the object with eyes that held the invariable expression with which they met the incidents of life, whether these incidents were the receiving of a banana from Miss Clarkson's hands, or, as had happened half an hour before, the spectacle of his dead mother being carried down-stairs.

It was not a stupid look; it was at once intent, unsympathetic, impersonal. Under it, now, its object experienced a moment of actual embarrassment. Miss Clarkson was not accustomed to the indifferent gaze of human eyes, and in her philanthropic work among the tenements she had been somewhat conspicuously successful with children. They seemed always to like her, to accept her; and if her undoubted charm of face, of dress, and of smile failed to win them, Miss Clarkson was not above resorting to the aid of little gifts, of toys, even to the pernicious power of pennies. She did good, but she did it in her own way. She was young,

she was rich, she was independent. She helped the poor because she pitied them, and wished to aid them, but her methods were unique, and were followed none the less serenely when, as frequently happened, they conflicted with all the accepted notions of organized philanthropy.

She had come to this room almost daily, Miss Clarkson remembered, since she had discovered the destitute Russian woman and her child there a month ago. The mother was dying of consumption; the child was neglected and hungry—yet both had an unmistakable air of birth, of breeding; and the mother's French was as perfect as the exquisitely finished manner that drew from Anne Clarkson, in the wretched tenement room, her utmost deference and courtesy. The child, too, had glints of polish. Punctiliously he opened doors, placed chairs, bowed; punctiliously he stood when the lady stood, sat when the lady sat, met her requests for small services with composure and appreciation. And (here was the rub) each time she came, bringing in her generous wake the comforts that lightened his mother's dreary journey into another world, he received her with the air of one courteously greeting a stranger, or,

at best, of one seeking an elusive memory as one surveys a half-familiar face.

Doggedly Anne Clarkson had persisted in her attentions to them both. The mother was grateful — there was no doubt of that. Under the ministrations of the nurse Miss Clarkson supplied, under the influence of food, of medicines, and of care, she brightened out of the apathy in which her new friend had found her. But to the last she retained something of her son's unresponsiveness, and an uncommunicativeness which tagged his as hereditary. She never spoke of herself, of her friends, or of her home. She made no last requests, left no last messages. Once, as she looked at her boy, her eyeballs exuded a film of moisture. Miss Clarkson interpreted this phenomenon rightly, and quietly said:

"I will see that he is well cared for." The sick woman gave her a long look, and then nodded.

"You will," she answered. "You are not of those who promise and do not perform. You are very good—you have been very good to us. Your reward should come. It does not always come to those who are good, but it should come to you. You should marry and

have children, and leave this terrible country, and be happy."

The words impressed Miss Clarkson, because, as she reminded herself now, they were almost the last her protégée uttered. She considered them excessively unmodern, and strongly out of place on the lips of one whose romance had ended in disillusionment.

Well, it was over. The mother was gone. But the child remained, and his future — his immediate future, at least — must be decided here and now. With a restless movement Anne Clarkson leaned toward him. In her abstraction she had shifted her glance from him for a few moments, and he had taken advantage of the interval to survey dispassionately the toes of the new shoes she had given to him. He glanced up now, and met her look with the singular unresponsiveness which seemed his note.

"We're going away, Ivan," she said, speaking with that artificial cheerfulness practised so universally upon the helpless and the young. "Mother has gone, you know, and we can't stay here any more. We're going to the country, to a beautiful place where there are flowers, and birds, and dogs, and other little boys and girls. So get your cap, dear."

Ivan looked unimpressed, but he rose with instant obedience and crossed the room to its solitary closet. His little figure looked very trim in the new suit she had bought for him; she noticed how well he carried himself. His preparations for departure were humorously simple. He took his cap from its peg, put it on his head, and opened the door for her to precede him in the utter abandonment of his "home." Earlier in the day Miss Clarkson had presented to pleased neighbors the furniture and clothing of the dead woman, taking the precaution to have it fumigated in an empty room in the building. On the same impulse she had given to an old bedridden Irishwoman a few little articles that had soothed the Russian's last days: a small night-lamp, a bed-tray, and the like. Ivan's outfit, consisting solely of the things she herself had given him, had been packed in his mother's one small foreign trunk, whose contents until then, Miss Clarkson observed, was an ikon, quaintly framed. Of letters, of souvenirs, of any clue of any kind to the identity of mother and son, there was none. She felt sure that the names they had given her were assumed.

Stiffly erect, Ivan waited beside the open

door. Miss Clarkson gave a methodical last look around the dismantled room, and walked out of it, the child following. At the top of the stairs she turned her head sharply, a sudden curiosity uppermost in her mind. Was he glancing back? she wondered. Was he showing any emotion? Did he feel any? He seemed so horribly mature — he *must* understand something of what this departure meant. Did he, by chance, need comforting? But Ivan was close by her side, his sombre black eyes looking straight before him, his new shoes creaking freshly as he descended the rickety steps. Miss Clarkson sighed. If only he were pretty, she reflected. There were always sentimental women ready and willing to adopt a handsome child. But even Ivan's mother would have declared him not pretty. He was merely small, and dark, and foreign, and reserved, and horribly self-contained. His black hair was perfectly straight, his lips made a straight line in his face. He had no dimples, no curls, none of the appealing graces and charms of childhood. He was seven—seven decades, she almost thought, with a sudden throb of pity for him. But he had one quality of childhood — helplessness. To that, at least, the Community to which she

had finally decided to intrust him would surely respond. She took his small hand in hers as they reached the street, and after an instinctive movement of withdrawal, like the startled fluttering of a bird, he suffered it to remain there. Together they walked to the nearest corner, and stood awaiting the coming of a trolley-car, the heat of an August sun blazing upon them, the stifling odors of the tenement quarter filling their nostrils. Rude, half-naked little boys jeered at them, and made invidious remarks about Ivan's new clothes; a small girl smiled shyly at him; a wretched yellow dog snapped at his heels. To these varying attentions the child gave the same quietly observant glance, a glance without rancor as without interest. Miss Clarkson experienced a sense of utter helplessness as she watched him.

"Did you know the little girl, Ivan?" she asked, in English.

"Yes, madam."

"Do you like her?"

"No, madam."

"Why not? She seemed a nice little girl."

There was no response. She tried again.

"Are you tired, dear?"

"No, madam."

"Are you glad you are going into the country and away from the hot, dirty city?"

"No, madam."

"Would you rather stay here?"

"No, madam."

The quality of the negative was the same in all.

Miss Clarkson gave him up. When they entered the car she sank into a depressed silence, which endured until they reached the Grand Central Station. There, after she had sent off several telegrams and bought their tickets, and established herself and her charge comfortably side by side on the end seat in a drawing-room car, she again essayed sprightly conversation adapted to the understanding of the young.

"Do you know the country, Ivan?" she asked, ingratiatingly. "Have you ever been there to see the grass and the cows and the blue skies?"

"No, madam."

"You will like them very much. All little boys and girls like the country, and are very happy there."

"Yes, madam."

"Do you like to play?"

"No, madam."

"Do you like to—to—look at picture-books?"

"No, madam."

"What do you like to do?"

There was no reply. Miss Clarkson groaned inwardly. Was he only a little monosyllabic machine? The infant regarded with calm eyes the sweep of the New York landscape across which the train was passing. His patron opened the new novel with which she had happily provided herself, plunged into its pages, and let herself rest by forgetting him for a while. He sat by her side motionless, observant, continuing to exude infinite patience.

"He ought to be planted on the Egyptian sands," reflected Miss Clarkson once, as she glanced at him. "He'd make a dear little brother to the Sphinx." She stopped a train-boy passing through the car and bought him a small box of chocolates, which he ate uninterruptedly, somewhat as the tiny hand of a clock marks the seconds. Later she presented him with a copy of a picture-paper. He surveyed its illustrations with studious intentness for five minutes, and then laid the paper on the seat beside him. Miss Clarkson again fled to sanctuary in her novel, wondering how long pure negation could enlist interest.

At the small station where they left the train the tension of the situation was slightly lessened. A plump little woman, with a round pink face, keen, very direct blue eyes, and live gray hair, deftly tooled a fat pony up to the asphalt, and greeted them with cheerful informality.

"Get in," she said, briskly, after a brief handshake with Miss Clarkson. "There's plenty of room in the phaeton. We pack five in sometimes. I was sorely tempted to bring two of the children; they begged to come to meet the new boy; but it seemed best not to rush him in the beginning, don't you know, so I left Josephine squalling behind the wood-pile, and Augustus Adolphus strangling manfully on a glass of lemonade intended to comfort him."

She laughed as she spoke, but her blue eyes surveyed the boy appraisingly as she tucked him into the space between herself and Miss Clarkson. He had stood cap in hand during the meeting between the ladies; now he replaced his cap upon his head, fixed his black eyes on the restless tail of the fat pony, and remained submerged under the encroaching summer garments of both women. Mrs. Eltner, presiding genius of the Lotus Brotherhood Colony, exchanged an eloquent glance with Miss Clarkson

as she started the pony along the winding ribbon of the country road. The New-Yorker's heart lightened. She had infinite faith in the plump, capable hands that held the reins; she believed them equal to anything, even to the perplexing task of guiding the infant career of Ivanovitch. Mrs. Eltner prattled on.

"Well," she quoted, in answer to Miss Clarkson's question, "they are so well that Fräulein von Hoffman is in despair over them. She has some new theories she's anxious to try when they're ill, but throughout the year she hasn't had one chance. Every blessed child is flamboyantly robust. Goodness! Why shouldn't they be? In the sunshine from eight in the morning until six at night. They have their lessons in a little roofed summer-house in the open air, their meals in another, and they almost sleep in the open air. There are ten of them now—counting your boy"—she nodded toward the unconscious Ivan—"four girls and six boys. None of the parents interferes with them. They sleep in the domitory with Fräulein, she teaches them a few hours a day, and the rest of the time we leave them alone. Fräulein assures me that the influence on their developing souls is wonderful." Mrs. Eltner

laughed comfortably. "It's all an experiment," she went on, more seriously. "Who can tell how it will end? But one thing is certain: we have taken these poor waifs from the New York streets, and we have at least made them healthy and happy to begin with. The rest must come later."

"An achievement," agreed Miss Clarkson. "I hope you will be as successful with my small charge. He is not healthy, and I doubt if he has ever known a moment of happiness. Possibly he can never take it in. I don't know—he puzzles me."

Her friend nodded, and they drove on in silence. It was almost sunset when the fat pony turned into an open gate leading to a big white colonial house, whose wide verandas held hammocks, easy-chairs, and one fat little girl asleep on a door-mat. On the sweeping lawn before the house an old man lounged comfortably in a garden-chair, surveying with quiet approval the efforts of a pretty girl in a wide sunbonnet who was weeding a flower-bed near him. Through the open window of a distant room came the sound of a piano. At the left of the house a solitary peacock strutted, his spreading tail alive in the sun's last rays. The

effect of the place was deliciously "homey." With eyes slightly distended, Ivan surveyed the monstrous fowl, turning his head to follow its progress as the phaeton rolled around the drive and stopped before the wide front door. The two women again exchanged glances.

"Absolutely the first evidence of human interest," remarked Miss Clarkson, with hushed solemnity. The other smiled with quiet confidence. "It will come," she predicted; "it will come all right. We do wonders with them here."

As they entered the wide hall a picturesque group disintegrated suddenly. A slender German woman, tall, gray-haired, slightly bent, detached herself from an encircling mass of childish hands and arms and legs, gave a hurried greeting to Miss Clarkson, of whom she rather disapproved, and turned eyes alight with interest on the new claimant for her ministrations. Cap in hand, Ivan looked up at her. Mrs. Eltner introduced them briefly.

"Your new little boy, Fräulein," she said, "Ivan Ivanovitch. He speaks English and French and Russian. He is going to love his new teacher and his new little friends, and be very happy here."

Fräulein von Hoffman bent down and kissed the chilling surface of Ivan's pale cheek.

"But yes," she cried, "of a certainty he shall be happy. We are all happy here—all, all. He shall have his place, his lessons, his little duties—but, ach, he is so young! He is the youngest of us. Still, he must have his duty." She checked her rapid English for a courteous explanation to Miss Clarkson.

"Each has his duties," she told that lady, while the line of children lent polite interest to her words, drinking them in, apparently, with open mouths. "Each of us must be useful to the community in some way, however small. That is our principle. Yes. Little Josephine waters every day the flowers in the dining-room, and they bloom gratefully for little Josephine—ach, how they bloom! Augustus Adolphus keeps the wood-box filled. It is Henry's task to water the garden plants, and Henry never forgets. So, too, it is with the others. But Ivan—Ivan is very young. He is but seven, you say. Yes, yes, what shall one do at seven?"

Her rapid, broken English ceased again as she surveyed the child, her blond brows knit in deep reflection. Then her thin face lit suddenly.

"Ach," she cried, enthusiastically, "an inspiration I have! He is too young to work as yet, this little Ivan, but he shall have his task, like the rest. He shall be our little sunbeam. He shall laugh and play and make us happy."

With a common hysterical impulse Miss Clarkson and Mrs. Eltner turned their heads to avoid each other's eyes, the former making a desperate effort at self-control as she gazed severely through a window near her. It was not funny, this thing, she reminded herself sternly; it was too ghastly to be funny, but there was no question that the selection of Ivan Ivanovitch as the joyous, all-pervasive sunbeam of the community at Locust Hall was slightly incongruous. When she could trust herself she glanced at him. He stood as he had stood before, his small, old, unchildish face turned up to the German, his black eyes fixed unwaveringly upon her gray ones. Under the glance Fräulein's expression changed. For an instant there was a look of bewilderment on her face, of a doubt of the wisdom of her choice of a mission for this unusual new-comer, but it disappeared as quickly as it had come. With recovered serenity she addressed him and those around him.

"But he need not begin to-night," she added, kindly, "not when he is tired. He shall eat, he shall rest, he shall sleep. Then to-morrow he shall take his place among us and be the little sunbeam. Yes, yes—think how far the sunbeam has to travel!" she murmured, inspirationally.

Miss Clarkson knelt down before the boy and gathered him into her arms. The act was spontaneous and sincere, but as she did it she realized that in the eyes of the German, and even in those of Mrs. Eltner, it seemed theatrical. It was one of the things Fräulein von Hoffman disapproved in her—this tendency to moments of emotion.

"Good-night, Ivan," she said. "I am going to stay until morning, so I shall see you then. Sleep well. I am sure you will be a happy little boy in this pleasant home."

The unfathomable eyes of Ivan Ivanovitch looked back into hers.

"Good-night, madam," he said, quietly. Then, as she was about to turn away, his small face took on for an instant the dawn of an expression. "Good-night, madam," he said again, more faintly.

Slight as the change had been, Miss Clarkson caught it. She swayed toward him.

"Are you homesick, Ivan?" she asked, caressingly, almost lovingly. "Would you like *me* to take you up-stairs and put you to bed?"

Fräulein von Hoffman broke in upon her speech.

"But they shall all go!" she cried. "It is their time. He will not be alone. Josephine shall take him by the hand; Augustus Adolphus shall lead the way. It will be a little procession—ach, yes! And he shall have his supper in the nursery."

A chubby, confident little girl of nine detached herself from the group near them and grasped the hand of Ivan Ivanovitch firmly within her own. He regarded her stoically for an instant; then his eyes returned to Miss Clarkson's, who had risen, and was watching him closely. There was a faint flicker in them as he replied to her question.

"No, madam," he said, gravely. "Thank you, madam. Good-night, madam."

He bowed deeply, drawing the reluctant figure of the startled Josephine into the salute as he did so. A sturdy German boy of eleven, with snapping brown eyes, placed himself before the children, his feet beating time, his head very high. "Forward, march!" he cried,

in clear, boyish tones. The triumphant Josephine obeyed the command, dragging her charge after her. Thus convoyed, one companion leading, another pulling, the rest following with many happy giggles, Ivan Ivanovitch marched up-stairs to bed. His life as the community's sunbeam had begun.

The next morning Fräulein von Hoffman met Miss Clarkson in the hall, and turned upon her the regard of a worried gray eye. Miss Clarkson returned the look, her heart sinking as she did so.

"It is that child," the German began. "He is of an interest—and ach, ja! of a discouragement," she added, with a gusty sigh. "Already I can see it—what it will be. He speaks not; he plays not. He gazes always from the window, and when one speaks, he says, 'Yes, madam' — only that. This morning I looked to see him bright and happy, but it is not so. Is it that his little heart breaks for his mother? Is it—that he is always thus?"

Miss Clarkson shook her head and then nodded, forming thereby unconsciously the sign of the cross. The combination seemed to answer the German's questions. Fräulein von Hoffman nodded also, slowly, and with comprehension.

"I don't know what you can do with him," said the American, frankly. "He's like that all the time. I asked his mother, and she admitted it. I brought him here because I hoped the other children might brighten him up, and I knew you could arouse him if any one could."

The tribute, rare from Miss Clarkson, cheered Fräulein von Hoffman. Her face cleared. She began to regain her self-confidence.

"Ach, well," she said, comfortably, "we will see. We will do our best—yes, of a certainty. And we will see." She strolled away after this oracular utterance, and Miss Clarkson went to breakfast. Thus neither witnessed a scene taking place at that moment on the lawn near the front veranda. Standing there with his back against a pillar, surrounded by the other children of the community, was Ivan Ivanovitch. In the foreground, facing him, stood Augustus Adolphus, addressing the new-comer in firm accents, and emphasizing his remarks by waving a grimy forefinger before Ivan Ivanovitch's uninterested face. The high, positive tones of Augustus Adolphus filled the air.

"Well, then, why don't you do it?" he was asking, fiercely. "You *got* to do it! You *have* to! Fräulein says so. The rest of us has to

do ours. I filled my wood-boxes already, and Josie watered the flowers. We did it early so we could watch you being a sunbeam, and now you ain't being one. Why ain't you? You *got* to! Why don't you begin?" The continued unresponsiveness of Ivan Ivanovitch irritated him at this point, and he turned excitedly to the others for support.

"'Ain't he got to?" he cried. "'Ain't he got to be a sunbeam? Fräulein said he should begin this morning. Well, then, why don't he begin?"

A childish buzz of corroboration answered him. It was plain that the assignment of Ivan's mission, publicly made as it had been the night before, had deeply impressed the children of the community. They closed around the two boys. The small Josephine laid a propelling hand upon Ivan's shoulder and tried to push him forward, with a vague idea of thus accelerating his task.

"Begin now," she suggested, encouragingly. "Do it, and have it over. That's the way I do."

In response to this maiden appeal the lips of Ivan Ivanovitch parted.

"I do not know how to do it," he announced, distinctly. "How shall I do it?"

Augustus Adolphus broke in again. "Aw, say, go on," he urged. "You *got* to do it! Why *don't* you, then?"

Ivan Ivanovitch turned upon him an eye in which the habitual expression of patience was merely intensified.

"I do not know how to do it," he said again, speaking slowly and painstakingly. "You tell me how; then I will do it."

Under the force of this counter-charge, Augustus Adolphus fell back.

"I—I—don't know, neither," he muttered, feebly. "I thought you knew. You *got* to know, 'cause you got to do it."

The eyes of the small Russian swept the little group, and lingered on the round face of Josephine.

"You tell me," he said to her. "Then I will do it."

Josephine rose to the occasion.

"Why, why," she began, doubtfully, "*I* know what it is. You be a sunbeam, you know. I know what a sunbeam is. It's a little piece of the sun. It is long and bright. It comes through the window and falls on the floor. Sometimes it falls on us. Sometimes it falls on flowers."

Offered this choice, Ivan at once expressed his preference.

"I will fall on flowers," he announced, with decision.

The brown eyes of Augustus Adolphus glittered as he suddenly grasped the possibilities of the situation.

"No, you won't, neither!" he cried, excitedly. "You got to do it *all!* You better begin now. You can fall through that window; it's open." He indicated, as he spoke, a low French window leading from the living-room on to the broad veranda. "He's got to!" he cried, again. "'Ain't he got to?" With a unanimous cry the meeting declared that he had got to. Some of the children knew better; others did not; but all knew Augustus Adolphus Schmidtt.

Without a word, Ivan turned, walked up the steps of the veranda, entered the wide hall, swung to the left, crossed the living-room, approached the window, and fell out, head first. There was something deeply impressive in the silence and swiftness of his action, something deliciously stimulating to the spectators in the thud of his small body on the unyielding wood. A long sigh of happiness was exhaled by the group of children. Certainly this was a new

duty—a strange one, but worthy, no doubt, since it emanated from Fräulein, and beyond question interesting as a spectacle. Augustus Adolphus resolved in that instant to attend to his personal tasks at an early hour each day, that he might have uninterrupted leisure for getting new falls out of Ivan's. That infant had now found his feet, and was methodically brushing the dust from his clothes. There was a rapidly developing lump over one eye, but his expression remained unchanged. Josephine approached him with happy gurgles. Her heart was filled with womanly sympathy, but her soul remained undaunted. She was of the Spartan stuff that sends sons to the war, and holds a reception for them if they return—from victory—on their shields. She cooed in conscious imitation of Fräulein's best manner. "Now, you can fall on flowers."

Her victim followed her unresistingly to the spot she indicated, and, having arrived, cast himself violently upon a bed of blazing nasturtiums. The enthusiastic and approving group of children closed around him as he rose. Even Augustus Adolphus, as he surveyed the wreck that remained, yielded to Ivan's loyal devotion to his rôle the tribute of an envious sigh.

"Now you can fall on us," he suggested, joyfully. Before the words had left his innocent lips, Ivan had made his choice. The next instant the air was full of arms, legs, caps, and hair.

"Lemme go!" shrieked Augustus Adolphus, battling wildly with the unsuspected and terrible force that had suddenly assailed him. "Lemme go, I tell you!"

The reply of Ivan came through set teeth as he planted one heel firmly in the left ear of the recumbent youth. "I have to fall on you," he explained, mildly, suiting the action to the word. "First I fall on you; then I let you go."

There was no question in the minds of the spectators that this was the most brilliant and successfully performed of the strange and interesting tasks of Ivan. They clustered around to tell him so, while Augustus Adolphus sought the dormitory for needed repairs. One of the rules of the community was that the children should settle their little disputes among themselves. Fortunately, perhaps, for Augustus Adolphus he found the dormitory empty, and was able to remove from his person the most obvious evidences of one hoisted by his own

petard. In the mean time Ivan Ivanovitch was experiencing a new sensation—the pleasurable emotion caused by the praise of one's kind. But he did not show that it was pleasant—he merely gazed and listened.

"I think your new duties is nice," Josephine informed him, as she gazed upon him with eyes humid with approval. "You have to do it every day," she added, gluttonously.

Ivan assented, but in his heart there lay a doubt. Seeking for light, he approached Fräulein von Hoffman that afternoon as she dozed and knitted under a sheltering tree.

He stopped before her and fixed her with his serious gaze.

"Does a sunbeam fall through windows?" he inquired, politely.

Fräulein von Hoffman regarded him with a drowsy lack of interest.

"But yes, surely, sometimes," she admitted.

"Does it fall always through the window—every day?"

"But yes, surely, if it is in the right place."

The community's sunbeam sighed.

"Does it fall on flowers and on boys and girls?" he persisted.

"But yes, it falls on everything that is near."

A look of pained surprise dawned upon the features of Ivan Ivanovitch.

"Always?" he asked, quickly. "Always—it falls on *everything* that is near?"

Fräulein von Hoffman placidly counted her stitches, confirming with a sigh her suspicion that in dozing she had dropped three.

"Not always," she murmured, absently. "But no. Only when the sun is shining."

Ivan carried this gleam of comfort with him when he went away, and it is very possible that he longed for a darkened world. But if, indeed, his daily task was difficult, as it frequently proved to be as the days passed, there were compensations — in the school games, in the companionships of his new friends, in the kindness of those around him. Even Augustus Adolphus was good to him at times. Unquestioningly, inscrutably, Ivan absorbed atmosphere, and did his share of the community's work as he saw it.

The theories of the community were consistently carried out. In the summer, after their few hours of study, the children were left to themselves. Together they worked out the problems of their little world; together they discussed, often with an uncanny insight, the

grown-ups around them. Sometimes the tasks of the others were forgotten; frequently, in the stress of work and play, Augustus Adolphus's wood-box remained unfulfilled; Josephine's flowers were unwatered. But the mission of Ivan as a busy and strenuous sunbeam was regularly and consistently carried out — all the children saw to that. Regularly, that is, save on dark days. Here he drew the line.

"Fräulein says it only falls on things when the sun shines," he explained, tersely, and he fulfilled his mission accordingly. Fräulein wondered where he had accumulated the choice collection of bumps and bruises that adorned his person; but he never told, and apparently nobody else knew. Mrs. Eltner marvelled darkly over the destruction of her favorite nasturtium-bed. Daily the stifled howls of Augustus Adolphus continued to rend the ambient air when the sunbeam fell on him; but he forbore to complain, suffering heroically this unpleasant feature of the programme, that the rest might not be curtailed. Once, indeed, he had rebelled.

"Why don't you fall on some one else?" he had demanded, sulkily. "You don't have to fall on me all the time."

The reply of the sunbeam was convincing in its simple truth.

"I do," he explained. "Fräulein has said so. It must fall always on the same place if it is there."

Augustus Adolphus was silenced. He was indeed there, always. It was unfortunate, but seemed inevitable, that he should contribute his share to the daily entertainment so deeply enjoyed by all.

It was, very appropriately, at Thanksgiving-time that Ivan's mission as an active sunbeam ended. He was engaged in his usual profound meditation in the presence of Miss Clarkson, who had come to see him, and who was at the moment digesting the information she had received, that not once in his months at Locust Hall had he been seen to smile. True, he seemed well and contented. His thin little figure was fast taking on plumpness; he was brown, bright-eyed. Studying him, Miss Clarkson observed a small bruise on his chin, another on his intellectual brow.

"How did you get those, Ivan?" she asked.

For some reason Ivan suddenly decided to tell her.

"I fell through the window. This one I got

yesterday"—he touched it—"this one I got Monday; this one I got last week." He revealed another that she had not discovered, lurking behind his left ear.

"But surely you didn't fall through the window as often as that!" gasped Miss Clarkson. The small boy surveyed her wearily.

"But yes," he murmured, in unconscious imitation of Fräulein. "I must fall through the window every day when the sun shines."

Miss Clarkson held him off at arm's-length and stared at him.

"In Heaven's name, *why?*" she demanded.

Ivan explained patiently. Miss Clarkson listened, asked a few questions, gave way to a moment of uncontrollable emotion. Then she called together the other children, and again heard the story. It came disjointedly from each in turn, but most fluently, most picturesquely, most convincingly, from the lips of Augustus Adolphus Schmidtt and the fair Josephine. When they had finished their artless recital, Miss Clarkson sought Fräulein von Hoffman. That afternoon, beside the big open fire in the children's winter play-room, Fräulein von Hoffman addressed her young charges in words brief but pointed, and as she talked the

mission of Ivan at Locust Hall took on a new significance, clear to the dullest mind.

"You were very cruel to Ivan—ach, most cruel! And he is not to fall any more, anywhere, on anything, you understand," explained the German, clearly. "He has no tasks any more. He is but to be happy, and you should love him and take care of him, because he is so small. That is all."

Ivan exhaled a sigh of deep contentment. Then he looked around him. The great logs on the andirons were blazing merrily. In the hands of Josephine a corn-popper waved above them, the corn inside burning unobserved as she lent her ears to Fräulein's earnest words. Ten apples, suspended on strings, swung from the mantel, spinning slowly as they roasted. It was a restful and agreeable scene to the eyes of little Ivan.

Josephine felt called upon to defend her friends.

"We didn't mean to be cruel," she explained, earnestly, answering the one of Fräulein's charges which had most impressed her. "We love Ivan. We love him lots. We like to see him to be a sunbeam, an' we thought he liked to be one. He never said he didn't."

The faces of his little companions were all around him. Ivan surveyed them in turn. They loved him — lots. Had not Josephine just said so? And only yesterday Augustus Adolphus had played marbles with him. It was very good to be loved, to have a home, and not to be a little sunbeam any longer. Then his eyes met those of Miss Clarkson, fixed upon him sympathetically.

"Would you like to go away, Ivan?" she asked, quietly. "Would you be happier somewhere else?"

The eyes of Ivan widened with sudden fear. To have this and to lose it!—now, if ever, he must speak! "Oh *no*," he cried, earnestly; "no, *no*, madam!"

Reassured, she smiled at him, and as she did so something in her look, in the atmosphere, in the moment, opened the boy's closed heart. He drew a long breath and smiled back at her —a shy, hesitant, unaccustomed smile, but one very charming on his serious little face. Miss Clarkson's heart leaped in sudden triumph. It was his first smile, and it was for her.

"I like it here," he said. "I like it very much, madam."

Miss Clarkson had moments of wisdom.

"Then you shall stay, my boy," she said. "You shall stay as long as you wish. But, remember, you must not be a sunbeam any more."

Ivan responded in one word—a simple, effective word, much used by his associates in response to pleasing announcements of holidays and vacations, but thus far a stranger on his lips. He threw back his head and straightened his shoulders.

"Hurray!" he cried, with deep fervor. This was enough for Augustus Adolphus and the fair Josephine. "Hurray!" they shrieked, in jubilant duet—"Hurray! Hurray!"

The others joined in. "Hur-ray!" cried the nine small companions of Ivan. He looked at them for a moment, his thin mouth twitching. They were glad, too, then, that he was to stay! He walked straight to Miss Clarkson, buried his face in her lap, and burst into tears. For a moment she held him close, smoothing his black head with a tender hand. Almost immediately he straightened himself and returned to the side of Josephine, shy, shamefaced, but smiling again—a new Ivan.

"What did you cry for?" demanded that young lady, obtusely. "Because you feel bad?"

Augustus Adolphus replied for his friend, with an insight beyond his years.

"You let him alone," he said, severely. "He don't never cry when he feels bad; *he* only cries when he feels good!"

VII

IN MEMORY OF HANNAH'S LAUGH

HIS name was "'Rastus Calhoun Breckenridge," he announced the morning that he began his new duties as janitor of the Adelaide apartments, and he at once gave the tenants to understand that no liberties were to be taken with it. He preferred it *all* when he was addressed in ordinary conversation, he explained to them, but he had no objections to the title, "Mistah Breckenridge," when they felt hurried. This interested every inmate of the Adelaide, and for a few days amazingly amused several, who gave play to their fancy in the use of abbreviations which struck them as humorous. Their jokes lost point, subsequently, when it was discovered that on no occasion did "Mistah Breckenridge" respond to their calls nor meet their demands—whereas his service to all others was swift, expert, phenomenally perfect. Thereafter the jokers forswore indul-

gence of their sense of humor and addressed the janitor at full length and with fuller deference, to reap their reward with those whose apartments were warm, whose reasonable requests were met, whose halls were clean, and whose door-knobs shone even as the rare smile of "Mistah Breckenridge" himself.

It required no unusual powers of observation to discover that as a janitor the new man was the rare and perfect specimen who keeps alive in a chilly world the tender plant of faith. Long before the sun was up his busy mop and broom were heard in the land, and the slip-slap of his carpet slippers, flopping along the halls as he made his nightly round, was the lullaby of dissipated souls who "retired" at eleven. Results followed with gratifying promptness. Apartments long empty were soon rented, and envious neighbors came to gaze in awe upon the Adelaide and its presiding genius, beholding in it the fine essence of New England neatness and in him a small, thin, nervous, insignificant-looking "colored gemman," who gazed past the sides of their faces with cold aloofness. Often, neighbors, passing the impressive entrance, heard from the lower regions of the building the sound of a high chuckle, deepening rapidly to

a contralto gurgle, and then broadening out into a long, rich, velvety laugh as smooth as a flowing stream. No one could hear that laugh unmoved. It rippled, it lilted, it died away, and rolled forth again until the most *blasé* listener smiled in sympathy, and children in the streets haw-hawed in mindless glee. It was the laugh of Hannah—*Mrs.* 'Rastus Calhoun Breckenridge, as her husband was careful to explain; and he once so far forgot his dignity as to add, expansively, "We got de stifkit dat prove hit, Hannah an' me. We got mah'd, *real* mah'd, by a pahson."

Hannah—stout, indolent, good-looking, good-natured, large enough to make two small persons like her husband—chuckled and gurgled into her fruity laugh.

"Dat's de mos' pahtickler man," she volunteered, artlessly. Then, seeing with wifely insight the first traces of gloom on her lord's brow, she winked, trembled like a jelly-fish in a fresh convulsion of her exhaustless mine of mirth, and disappeared into the lower regions, to which, it was said, her husband devoted much more housewifely care than she did. Usually he cooked his meals—and hers. Invariably he scrubbed and swept the floors.

Not infrequently he washed and ironed. But whatever he did and whatever he was, the ripple of his wife's easy laughter followed him like the wave in the wake of a puffing tug; and as he listened, the weazened face of "Mistah Breckenridge" took on the expression of a small dog who hears his master's footsteps at the end of a dragging day.

The strenuousness of life left 'Rastus little time for the society of his wife, but occasionally on a Sunday afternoon a rainbow-hued apparition appeared at the entrance of the Adelaide, which, being resolved into its elements, was recognized as "Mistah" and Mrs. Breckenridge attired for a walk. Richly red were the hats of Hannah, brilliantly blue her gown, glaringly yellow her new kid gloves. Like a rubber-tired automobile she rolled along the street, while, not a bad second — immaculate, silent, spatted, creased, silk-hatted, gloved, and lavender-tied — pattered her small husband. He rarely spoke and never laughed; but there was no evidence that Hannah missed these attentions; if she did, there were numerous compensations, one of which she confided to the cook of the newly married Browns, on the first floor.

"'Rastus suttinly do pay mah bills," she murmured, appreciatively. And then, with her unctuous laugh, "An' ah suttinly does keep dat man busy at hit!"

Quite possibly it was this and his other occupations which for a long time made "Mistah Breckenridge" seemingly oblivious of a situation which deeply impressed many others. It was the frequent presence in his home of another "colored gemman"—large, brilliantly attired, loud-voiced, and cheerful—who called upon Hannah three or four times a week and whiled away many hours in her stimulating society. Occasionally her husband found him there, but if the fact annoyed him he gave no evidence of it. It was observed, too, that the manner of the visitor was gingerly deferential toward his host; he evidently desired no trouble with "Mistah Breckenridge." Occasionally he took Hannah for a walk; several times he brought her simple offerings of chickens and melons, heartening her to their consumption by participating in the same. One evening he presented her with a rhine stone belt-buckle. The next morning "Mistah Breckenridge" sought young Haddon Brown, the newly married, who happened to be a lawyer as well as

a happy groom. Without preface or apology, 'Rastus came to the point. He wished a divorce from Hannah. He wished it to be procured as cheaply as possible, but economy was not to interfere with its being riveted as strongly as the law permitted. He had his facts neatly tabulated. There was no emotion on his little black face. At the door, after young Brown had promised to do what he could for him, "Mistah Breckenridge" paused.

"Git it jes' as quick as yuh kin, Mistah Brown," he suggested, "foh ef yuh don't, I'se feared Hannah ain't a-gwine tuh stay tell hit comes. Hannah am mighty sudden sometimes in huh ways." With this final tribute to his spouse, he shut the door quietly and departed.

In due time Haddon Brown handed "Mistah Breckenridge" the documentary evidence of his freedom, and immediately on its receipt Hannah rose, donned her most radiant attire, shook out a few farewell peals of laughter, and departed, closely followed by the friend of the family, beautiful in patent-leather shoes, new gray spats, and a tie to match. Left alone, 'Rastus rearranged his household possessions, watered the geraniums blooming in his basement windows, scrubbed, washed, answered

bells as scrupulously as of yore, and each night, when the work of the day was done, donned his best clothes, oiled his crinkly hair, and departed, returning in time for his usual inspection of the halls at eleven o'clock.

At the end of one month he set a fresh geranium in the window, purchased a generous supply of provisions, went forth attired like Solomon, and came back holding in one hand the hand of a blushing bride, and in the other the "stifkit," signed by the negro minister who had just married them.

No two human beings could have been more unlike than the former and the present Mrs. 'Rastus Calhoun Breckenridge. The bride was tall, thin, chocolate-colored, serious, and hard-working. She toiled as steadily and as indefatigably as her husband, and to the most cynical observer it was plain that she loved him and valued him even at his worth. She cooked appetizing meals for him, to which he did full justice; she mended his old clothes and saw to it that he bought new ones; she saved his money; and at the end of the year she presented him with a small, fat, black son, over which 'Rastus hung in pathetic wonder.

He himself had begun to grow stout. He

put on more flesh as three additional years passed. He seemed well-fed, happy, and prosperous. He had money in the bank. His wages had been twice increased, and one Christmas the enthusiastic tenants of the Adelaide had solemnly presented him with a watch, with his name and the value of his services inscribed in the case. His little boy flourished, his silent wife still adored him. The world seemed good to 'Rastus.

One day a dirty note was put into his hand by a small black youth he had never seen before. It was brief but pointed:

"I am sik. Com to Sharty Hospitl. He ain't duin nuthen fer me. HANNAH."

"Mistah Breckenridge" carefully placed the note in his pocket, put his hat on his head, and went to the Charity Hospital. It was not hard to find Hannah. She had not been there long, but the doctors and nurses liked her and seemed to have been expecting him.

"She's the life of the place," said one of them. "She's got a lot of pluck, too, and laughs when we hurt her. She thinks she's going to get well, but she isn't."

The little round face of 'Rastus changed expression.

"She gwine tuh die?" he asked, quickly.

"Sure," was the terse reply.

"How—how soon?"

The doctor hesitated. "In about a month, I think," he said, finally.

'Rastus carried the memory of the words into the ward where she lay, and then felt a quick sense of reaction. Die? Why, this was the old-time Hannah, the Hannah of his youth, the Hannah he had married. She was thinner, but the lines had smoothed out of her face and her big black eyes looked up at him as confidingly as the eyes of a baby. She laughed, too, a little—a ghost of the old, fat, comfortable chuckle; but there was nothing of death nor even of suffering about Hannah that day. Her spirit was not yet overthrown.

"Ahm awful glad tuh see yuh, honey," she said. "Ah knew yuh'd cum."

'Rastus sat down on the wooden chair beside her and fixed his little black eyes unwinkingly upon her face. In his hands he held his hat, which he twisted nervously between his knees at first, but finally forgetfully dropped on the floor as his embarrassment passed. Propped

up on her pillows, Hannah chatted incessantly, telling him the small details of her hospital life and such few facts of her illness as she had been permitted to know.

"I ain' got no pain," she assured him—"des now, I mean. Bimeby hit 'll cum, like hit do ebery aftahnoon, but doctah he come, too, an' he git de better ub hit, ebery time. He sure am good to me, dat man!"

Her white teeth flashed in a smile as she talked, but the eyes she kept on the man's face had a curious look of wonder in them.

"Yuh look well, honey," she said, finally, "an' yit yuh doan look well. How come dat? You-all ain' got nuffin' tuh trouble yuh, is yuh?"

'Rastus hurriedly assured her that he had not. He did not mention his wife nor child, of whose existence she was, of course, perfectly aware; but he dilated on the glories of his position, the size of his income, and the gift of the watch. He pulled the last from his pocket as he spoke of it, and she wagged her head proudly over it and shamelessly boasted to the nurse who happened to come to her side.

"Dey give dat to mah husban'," she said.

Then she mentioned casually, with all her old naïveté, "Leaseways, he wuz mah husban' oncet."

"Mistah Breckenridge" ignored this little incident. His mind was on practical things.

"Yuh got all yuh want, Hannah?" he asked. "'Caze ahm gwine tuh git hit foh yuh ef yuh ain't."

Hannah, who seemed prepared for this inquiry, responded to it with much promptness. She needed a wrapper, she said, and some cologne, and three new night-gowns, and "a lil chicking." 'Rastus wrote down each item painstakingly and somewhat ostentatiously in a hand suited to unruled paper. Then he bowed to the nurse, touched Hannah's hand with his sinewy little paw, and trotted out with an air of vast importance.

For several weeks the Adelaide was almost neglected, and puzzled tenants sought the janitor in vain. He was rarely home, but Dinah, dark-browed, sullen, red-lidded, and with a look of suffering on her plain face, responded to their demands and did, so far as she could, her husband's work and her own. She made no explanation of his absence, and the last one which would have been accepted

was the truth—that day after day "Mistah Breckenridge" sat by the bedside of Hannah, talking to her, cheering her, nursing her, feeding her with the fruit he had brought her. He had almost superseded the nurse; and the doctors, watching the pair, let them do much as they pleased, on the dreary theory that nothing Hannah did could hurt her now. Sometimes she had hours of severe pain, during which he remained with her, holding her hand, soothing her, and lifting her still great bulk in his thin arms with unexpected strength. In her better hours she talked to him, telling him stories about the other patients, anecdotes of nurses and doctors, and mimicking several luckless victims to the life.

It was six weeks before Hannah died, very suddenly, and in one of her paroxysms of suffering. 'Rastus was with her at the end, as he had been during the hard weeks preceding it. When he realized that all was over, he left the room, sought an undertaker, had a brief but pregnant interview with him, and then disappeared from the hospital and from the city as well. Where he went no one knew, though Dinah, wellnigh frantic, strove distractedly to learn. On the morning of Hannah's funeral he

returned and assumed a leading part in that melancholy procession, long after referred to as "de mos' scrumptuous buryin'" in colored circles. Nothing had been omitted that she would have wished. Tall plumes nodded on the hearse, many carriages gathered in the mourners, and close behind the silver-trimmed coffin which held all that was left of Hannah "Mistah Breckenridge" walked with leaden steps, his small face drawn with grief. Subsequently he drew most of his savings from the bank to pay the bills, and, having paid them, returned once more to his anxious family and the monotonous routine of life at the Adelaide.

Dinah welcomed him coldly, and went about her duties with her head high. She said no word of reproach, and it was not until several weeks had passed that it was borne in upon her that 'Rastus remained oblivious not only to her just wifely resentment, but to most other things and emotions in life as well. He did his work, but he ate little and slept less, and the flesh of his prosperous years seemed to drop from him even as the startled beholder gazed. In despair Dinah sought Haddon Brown and laid the case before him.

"Dat man am suttinly gwine lose his min',"

she sobbed, "ef he keep on like he doin'. Den what gwine become of me and dat in'cen' chile!"

Young Brown casually and unostentatiously looked 'Rastus over, and was not satisfied with the survey. The janitor's lips were drawn, his eyes were glassy, his clothes hung loosely on his shrunken little figure. He did his work as a manikin wound up for the purpose might have done it. There was no spring, no energy, no snap. Mr. Brown waited a fortnight, expecting some change. None coming, one Sunday morning he urged 'Rastus to go with him on a fishing trip, carry bait, fish if he wanted to, and make himself generally useful. With unrelieved gloom "Mistah Breckenridge" accepted the invitation, and the two left the city behind them, and sought the peace of wood and stream and broad, overarching sky.

When he had found the shaded nook that seemed most promising, young Brown baited his hook, dropped it into the water, and gave himself up to pleasant reveries in which poor "Mistah Breckenridge" had no part. He had good-naturedly brought him out here for rest and change and sport and pure air, he told himself, but it was hardly to be expected that

he should do more. He yawned, dozed, and surveyed his line without curiosity; beside him sat "Mistah Breckenridge," every muscle of him tense, and a light in his eyes that was not nice to see.

The spot they had chosen was a not infrequented one in the Bronx woods, and at intervals the sound of human voices came to them and the light colors of a woman's gown showed through the trees. Suddenly a laugh was borne to their ears—a woman's laugh; light, happy, irrepressible. Young Brown opened one eye. It sounded like the laugh of a nice girl. He looked lazily in the direction whence it came. Then close by his side he heard a thud, a groan. His companion had pitched full length on the ground, and lay there crying with great, gasping sobs, and tearing up the grasses by the roots. Brown gazed aghast, startled, sympathetic, understanding dimly, yet repelled by this unmasculine outburst. He began to speak, but changed his mind and waited, his eyes again on the bobbing cork of his line.

"Mistah Breckenridge" cried a long time—a very long time, indeed, it seemed to young Brown, ill at ease and wholly unused to such

demonstrations. Then he sat up, pulled himself together, and turned a distorted face toward the young man who had been so good a friend to him.

"You-all know, Mr. Brown, ah sure is ashamed," he said, quietly, "but ah feel bettah, an' ah guess hit done me good. Ah felt like ah could kill someone when we come yeah, but ah feel differnt now."

His voice trailed into silence. He restlessly pulled up dandelions and blades of grass around him, but his face had relaxed and he seemed calm. Haddon Brown murmured something about a nervous strain, but the other did not seem to hear him.

"Hit wuz dat lady laffin'," he said, suddenly. "You-all know how mah Hannah use tuh laff. Mah gracious! Yuh could heah dat woman a mile! An' yuh know," he proceeded, slowly, "hit done me lots o' good, Mistah Brown, des to heah huh. Ahm a silen' man, an' ah doan laff much, but ah liked hit in Hannah, ah suttinly did—mighty well. Hit des made dis mo'nful ole wurl' seem a chee'ful place—hit did indeed."

Brown said nothing. There was nothing in his mind that quite fitted the occasion. "Mis-

tah Breckenridge" ripped a few more dandelions off their stems and went on.

"W'y, when dat woman lef' me—when mah Hannah went away—ah use tuh go aftah night to de place whah she lived, jes' to heah huh laff again. Ah'd stan' out in d' dahk, an' ah'd see huh shadow on de cu'tin, an' den ah'd heah huh laff an' laff lak she always done, an' den—ah'd come home! Ah done dat all dese yeahs sense mah Hannah lef' me. Dinah's all right. Ah ain' complainin' none 'bout Dinah. Ah mah'd huh caze ah wuz lonesome, an' she suttinly bin a good wife to me. Ahm goin' to wuk foh huh tell ah git back all the money ah spent on Hannah. Hit wus Dinah's money, too. But"— he burst out again with a sudden long wail—"ah jes' doan see how ahm goin' tuh keep on livin in a worl' whah dey ain't no Hannah!"

His grief gathered force as he gave it rein. He hurled himself down on the ground again and tore at the grasses with his thin black hands.

"Oh, ah want, ah want, *ah want tuh heah mah Hannah laff again!*" he cried, frenziedly.

A fish nibbled at the bait on Brown's hook, changed his mind, flirted his fins, and swam

away—a proof of the proverb about second thoughts. A bird in the branches of the tree above the two men burst into ecstatic song. But neither heard him. "Mistah Breckenridge" had buried his black face in the cool grass, his hot tears falling fast upon it. Beside him young Brown, brought face to face with elemental conditions, sat silent and thought hard.

VIII

THE QUEST OF AUNT NANCY

IT was in a stuffy compartment of a night train approaching Paris that Jessica and I were privileged to look upon Aunt Nancy for the first time. Her obvious age would soon have attracted our attention, no doubt, and certainly the gallantry with which she carried her eighty years could not long have escaped the observation of two such earnest students of humanity as we believed ourselves to be. But the characteristic in her which at once caught my eye was her expression—a look of such keen alertness, such intense vitality, that even in the mental stagnation that accompanies night travel I wondered what, in her surroundings, could explain it.

The dingy carriage in which we sat was vaguely illuminated by an oil lamp, the insufficient rays of which brought out effective high lights on the bald head of one audibly

slumbering German on our side of the compartment, and on the heavy face of a stout Frenchwoman who sat opposite him, next to the old lady upon whom I was concentrating my attention. The latter, obviously an American, the two foreigners, and ourselves, were the sole occupants of the compartment; and certainly in the appearance of none of her four fellow-passengers was there justification of the wide-awake intentness of the kind old eyes that now beamed on us through heavy, steel-rimmed spectacles. Pensively, as befitted the weary wanderer, I marvelled. How could she look so alive, so wide awake, so energetic, at one o'clock in the morning?

The bald-headed man slept on. The stout woman removed a shell comb from her back hair and composed herself for deeper slumber. Jessica presented to my lambent gaze a visage which besought unspoken sympathy, and mutely breathed a protest against travel in general and this phase of it in particular. Jessica in the "still small hours" was never really gay. It was dimly comforting to one of my companionable nature to turn from her to the little old woman opposite me. In figure and dress she might have posed for one of Leech's

drawings of ancient dames, so quaintly prim was she, so precise in their folds were her little black mantle and her simple black gown, so effective a frame to her wrinkled face was the wide black bonnet she wore. On her hands, demurely crossed in her lap, were black lace mitts. Moreover, she was enveloped, so to speak, in a dim aroma of peppermint, the source of which was even then slightly distending one faded cheek. Irrepressibly I smiled at her, and at once a long-drawn sigh of pleasure floated across to me. In spontaneous good-fellowship she leaned forward.

"It's a real comfortable journey, ain't it?" she whispered, so evidently torn between a passionate desire to talk and consideration for the sleepers that my heart went out to her.

"Well, if you mean this especial journey—" I hesitated.

"Yes, I do," she insisted. "The seats are real comfortable. Everything is." She threw out her mittened hands with a gesture that seemed to emphasize a demand for approval. "I wouldn't change a single thing. Some say it's hot; I don't think 'tis. I wouldn't mind, though, if 'twas. We're gettin' a nice draught."

I looked through the open window at the

French landscape, bathed in the glory of an August moon.

"That, at least, is very satisfactory," I admitted, cheerfully.

She looked a little blank as she glanced around, and a queer expression of responsibility settled over her features, blurring their brightness like a veil.

"I see," she said, slowly. "You mean France. Yes, 'tis nice, an' they's certainly a great deal to see in it." She hesitated a moment, and then went on more rapidly. "You know," she continued, in her high-keyed, sibilant whisper, "it's some different with me from what 'tis with you. You can speak French. I heard you talkin' to the conductor. An' I suppose you've been here often, an' like it. But this is the first time *I've* come over to Europe. I've always meant to, sometime, but things ain't been just so's I *could* come. Now 't I'm here, I can't stay long, an' I must say I feel kind of homesick. There's so much to see it jest makes my head swim. I come for a purpose—a purpose of my own—but now 't I'm here, I want to do my duty an' see things. I declare," she added, shamefacedly, "I most hate to go to sleep nights, I'm so afraid I'll

miss something an' hear about it when I git back."

I asked a conventional question, which evoked a detailed report of her journeyings. By this time Jessica had opened one eye; the two foreigners slept on peacefully. She had landed at Naples, the old lady told me; and from her subsequent remarks I gathered that she had found the Italians as a people deficient in the admirable qualities of cleanliness and modesty. She lamented, also, an over-preponderance of art galleries, and the surprising slowness of the natives to grasp intelligent remarks made in the English tongue. Aside from these failings, however, she had found Italy somewhat interesting, and she mentioned especially the grotto at Capri and the ascent of Vesuvius. She added, casually, that few of her fellow-tourists had made this latter excursion, as it was just after the severest eruptions, and the air had been full of dust and cinders. Jessica opened the other eye. I began to experience vivid interest in the conversation.

Rome, she further revealed, meant to her the Campagna and the Catacombs. On the former she had taken walks, and in the very bowels of the latter she had seemingly burrowed for days,

following some mysterious purpose of her own. Her favorite time for a promenade on the Campagna, and one she paused to recommend to me, was at dusk, the place then being quiet and peaceful, owing to the fact that tourists, foolishly fearing the fever, kept away from it after sunset.

At this point Jessica sat up, arranged a pillow comfortably behind her back, and gave her undivided attention to the monologue. At last she put a question. Was the lady travelling alone? The lady hastened to explain that she was not.

"My, no," she said, briskly. "I'm a tourist —that's what they call 'em, you know, when they're with a man. They's eighteen in our party, and the man that is takin' us is Mr. James George Jackson. He's real nice. He's in one of the other cars on this train, an' they's three gentlemen with him that belong to us, too. All the rest stayed in Paris because they was tired. You see," she added, explanatorily, "we done Lourdes in two days, an' we took it off our time in Paris. We ain't got much time in Paris, anyhow, so we went an' come back at night. I s'pose the rest thought it might be tryin' in the heat, so they stayed behind an'

went to Fontingblow yesterday an' up the Seen to-day. But I saw the Black Forest when we was in Germany, an' the Rhine, too, an' some of us walked from Binjen to Cooblens, so's we could git the view real well. So I thought I'd let the French river an' forest go, an' see Lourdes instead."

Jessica interrupted here.

"I beg your pardon," she asked, earnestly, "but — have you really been travelling two nights and sight-seeing two days in that fearful crush at Lourdes without any sleep?"

Our new friend nodded slowly, as one to whose attention the matter had just been directed.

"Why, yes, that's so," she conceded. "But I ain't a bit tired. Old folks don't need much sleep, you know, an' I'm pretty old. I was eighty-one last June."

Jessica dropped her pillow and sat up very straight, a slight flush upon her face. Our new friend prattled on until the lights of Paris appeared in the distance, and Jessica and I began to collect the impressive array of impedimenta with which we had thoughtfully multiplied the discomfort of travel. As we pulled down packages of rugs and tightened various straps the

bright eyes of the little old woman watched us unswervingly through her spectacles. Grasping firmly a stout and serviceable umbrella, she was ready to disembark. If she had brought any baggage with her, which I doubted, it was evidently in the fostering care of Mr. James George Jackson.

"What hotel are you goin' to?" she asked, suddenly. "I know a real good one."

I told her it was the St. James et D'Albany, and her wrinkled face grew radiant.

"Well, now, I declare," she cried, heartily, "*ain't* that nice! That's jest where we're stayin', an' I'm as comfor'ble as I can be. I got a room with a window that looks right into the Twilry Gardens. Mr. Jackson says that I must have the best they is, because I'm the oldest. 'Age before beauty,' he says, an' none of the other ladies minds a bit. They certainly are good to me. Of course, I don't say 't I wouldn't like a more relishin' breakfast, because I would; an' I ain't got used to that waiter man comin' right into my room with his trays before I'm out of my bed, an' I never expect to. But *'tis* a good hotel, an' the lady that runs it is real nice, if she *is* French."

The train swung into the great station as she

spoke, and a round, perspiring, and very grimy masculine face presented itself at the door of our compartment.

"Well, Aunt Nancy," said the owner of this, with a sprightly effort at cheerfulness, "you alive yet? The rest of us are dead. You come right along with me now, and I'll whisk you up to the hotel in a cab. And if you take my advice, you'll go to bed and stay there for two days, after this experience."

He tucked the old lady under his arm as he spoke, and she trotted off with him in high good-humor, turning several times to nod and smile at us as she departed.

At eight o'clock the following morning I was awakened by Jessica, who stood at my bedside light-heartedly reminding me of my self-imposed duty of going early to the station to attend to the luggage, which we had omitted to do the night before. My replies to this suggestion, while they held Jessica's awe-struck attention for five minutes, would be of no interest here. Bitterly I rose, reluctantly and yawningly I dressed. At nine I stood at the entrance of our hotel signalling sleepily for a cab, and wilting already under the heat of the August sun. While I waited, a tourist coach drew up

at the curb. It was gorgeous with red paint and conspicuous with large signs bearing the lettering "À VERSAILLES." The driver remained on the box. The guide, evidently there by appointment and sharply on time, leaped to the sidewalk, glanced at his watch, snapped the case shut with a satisfied nod, and stood with his eyes on the hotel entrance. One tiny black figure came forth, greeted him with a blithe "Bongjure," and intrepidly began the perilous ascent of the ladder he hastened to place against the side of the coach for her convenience. It was Aunt Nancy, dressed as she had been the night before, but immaculately neat, and reflecting in her face the brightness of the morning. I greeted her, and in her glad surprise at seeing me again she remained suspended between earth and heaven to talk to me, incidentally revealing the whole of two serviceable gaiters, the tiny ruffle of an alpaca petticoat, and a long, flat section of gray-striped cotton hose.

"Well, well," she beamed. "Ain't this nice? Yes, I'm goin'. The rest ain't ready yet, but I've been awake sence five, so I thought I'd come right down an' watch the coach fill up. The men ain't goin'—they're so tired, poor

dears. Onri, my waiter, says every last one of 'em is in bed yit. But some of the ladies that went up the Seen yesterday is comin', so I guess we'll have a real nice party. We're goin' to see the palace an' the Treenon first, an' then I'm goin' to the fair in the village. Mr. Jackson says a French fair is real interestin', but he ain't goin'. He said last night he had a great deal of work to do in his room to-day, an' he guessed we wouldn't none of us see him till dinner. Do you know"—she lowered her voice mysteriously and cast an apprehensive eye about her as she went on—"Onri says Mr. Jackson's *asleep* this very minute, an' it's most nine o'clock in the mornin'!"

These startling revelations were checked by the appearance of two of her fellow-tourists, and I seized the opportunity afforded by this interruption to depart upon my uncongenial task.

We did not see Aunt Nancy again until the morning of our third day in Paris, when I ran across her in the galleries of the Luxembourg. She was settled comfortably in a bright-red upholstered seat near the main entrance, and on her wrinkled face was an expression of perfect peace.

"Well, I'm glad to see you resting at last," was my greeting.

"Yes, I'm restin'," she conceded. "I always do in the art galleries," she added, simply, as I sat down beside her. "They've got the comfort'blest chairs here of any, I think, though they was some nice ones in Florence, too; an' in one of the places in Rome they was a long seat where you could 'most lay down. I took a real nice nap there. You see," she continued, smoothing an imaginary wrinkle out of one lace mitt, "I don't know much about pictures, *anyway*, but I come right along with the others, an' when I git here I jest set down an' rest till they git through lookin' at 'em. I don't know what's Michelangelo an' what *ain't*, an' 't seems to me it's too late to find out now."

Jessica appeared at this moment, and further revelations were checked by greetings, followed almost immediately by our reluctant departure to keep an appointment. Before we left, however, we learned that the day at Versailles had been followed by an evening "at one of them French kafes where women sing," and that fourteen hours of sight-seeing in Paris itself had dispelled the threatened ennui of the second day.

Late that evening Mr. James George Jackson tottered to the side of Jessica in the corridor of the Hôtel D'Albany and addressed her, wiping his brow as he did so.

"It's the old lady," he said—"Aunt Nancy Wheeler, you know. She asked me to ask you two ladies if you wouldn't like to join us in a drive this evening. She wants to see how Paris looks at night, an' I've got to show her."

He swayed languidly against a pillar when we had accepted the invitation, and groaned in reply to Jessica's tribute to the old lady's activity.

"She's active all right," he remarked, grimly. "If there's anything left of *me* after she gets through, it 'll be because I've inherited an iron constitution from my mother. She's worn out every other man in the party weeks ago. The worst of it is that I don't know why she does it. She really doesn't care about anything; I'm sure of that. But she's got some object; so she goes from early morn till dewy eve, and of course some one's got to go with her; we can't let her wander around alone. Besides, what I'm afraid of is that she'll go all to pieces some day —like the deacon's one-horse shay, you know, and there won't be anything left but a little

heap of alpaca clothes and congress gaiters. She's worn out six pair of gaiters since we started," he added, with a wail. "I know, because I've had to buy them. *She* hasn't had time." He shook his head mournfully as he wandered away.

Jessica and I bade Aunt Nancy an affecting farewell that night, as we were leaving Paris the next day. For several weeks we heard no more of her, but in Scotland we crossed her trail again. The Highlands were full of rumors of an intrepid old dame who had "done" the lakes and the Trossachs as apparently they had never been done before. Was she an American? She was. Eighty years old, dressed in black, with a big bonnet, steel-rimmed spectacles, and gaiters? All was correct but the gaiters. Seemingly the gaiter supply had been exhausted by the constant demand. She wore shoes with heavy soles and, our informant added, happily, gray, striped stockings. From the rumors of her achievements on land and water, Jessica and I glanced apprehensively over the surface of Scotland, fearing to see it strewn with exhausted boatmen, guides, and drivers; but apparently all her victims had survived, though they bore as a souvenir of their experience with

her a haggard and hunted look which Jessica declared she could detect from the top seat of the loftiest coach.

Drifting down through Ireland we heard another echo of Aunt Nancy. She had ridden on horseback through the Gap of Dunloe, no difficult feat in itself, and one achieved daily during Killarney's tourist season by old ladies of various countries and creeds. In Aunt Nancy's case, however, it appeared that she had been able to enjoy that variety which is so gratifying a feature of human experience. Notwithstanding the fact that she had never been on the back of a horse in her life, she unerringly selected the freshest and most frolicsome of the Irish ponies as her mount. It appears further that she was finally lifted to the saddle of this animal as the result of a distinct understanding between Mr. James George Jackson and her guide that the latter gentleman was not only to accompany the lady every foot of the route, but was meantime to cling valiantly to the bridle with both hands. Unfortunately, this arrangement, so deeply satisfying to all, was not ratified by the mettlesome Irish pony; the result being that, after the guide had been swept off his feet by a sudden and unexpected lift of the animal's

forelegs, Aunt Nancy and the pony continued the excursion alone. Judging from the terse words of one of the observers, it must have been an exciting spectacle while it lasted, though it passed all too rapidly beyond the line of the beholder's longing vision.

"Ye c'u'dn't tell," remarked this gentleman, sadly, in relating the accident, "which was the harse an' which the auld lady, an' which the Gap of Dunloe!"

Excited pursuers did not "catch 'em," as they were urged to do by the frenzied Mr. Jackson, but they were rewarded by finding various portions of Aunt Nancy's wearing apparel scattered along the trail. Items: one black bonnet, one cape, one handkerchief, one pair of steel-rimmed spectacles. Apparently only those garments securely fastened in place, such as shoes and lace mitts, had survived the experience. Apparently, also, Aunt Nancy had made in almost unbroken silence her exciting mountain ride. The exception seemingly occurred somewhere in the Dark Valley, where a mountain woman, seeing her fly by, had thoughtlessly urged her to stop and buy a glass of goat's milk. The woman's memory of the encounter was slightly vague, it having ended so abruptly,

but she retained the impression that Aunt Nancy had expressed an unusual degree of regret at being unable to accept her invitation.

"'Twasn't till thin I saw the poor harse was crazy wid fright, an' the auld lady's close blowin' over his eyes," added the mountain woman, sympathetically. "An' I couldn't do nathin', becuz, begorra, whin I lifted me v'ice to call me big bye, the auld woman an' the harse was half-way down the valley."

Fortunately, five or six miles of this stimulating pace had a blighting effect on the wild Hibernian spirits of the pony, with the result that he and his rider ambled at a most sedate gait into the space where the row-boats were waiting their passengers for Ross Castle, and where the remaining members of the party were expected to meet. The remaining members of the party, for obvious reasons, were not yet there; and the long delay before their arrival gave Aunt Nancy time to replace the missing articles of her apparel with garments borrowed from the woman at the refreshment booth, and to eat a hearty luncheon. Thus refreshed, she was ready for the fourteen-mile journey in a row-boat to Ross Castle, which was the next item on the programme of the day; and she made

it that afternoon, notwithstanding the almost hysterical expostulations of Mr. James George Jackson.

It was not until we sailed for America that we looked again into Aunt Nancy's dauntless eyes. She was the first passenger we saw when we reached the deck of the *Columbia*, and her joy in the encounter was as deep as our own. We chatted for a moment, and then she darted off to greet various members of her party from whom side excursions had temporarily separated her.

The sea was slumberously calm, bathed in hazy autumnal sunshine. Light-hearted men and women in white linen and pale flannel costumes strolled about the decks explaining to one another what good sailors they were, and how they hoped the sea would not remain monotonously smooth.

"One wants a little life and swing on a ship," explained one fat, blond man on whose face we were even then looking, though we knew it not, for the last time in seven sad days. To a unit the passengers poured into the dining-saloon at the first call for luncheon. To a unit they consumed everything on the bill of fare. All was peace and appetite.

That afternoon the sea roused herself drowsi-

ly, turned over, and yawned. The blue waves of the morning were gone. In their place were huge, oily, black swells, which lazily lifted the *Columbia*, held her suspended for a long minute, and then with slow, shuddering reluctance let her down, down, down. An interesting young Scotchman who was sitting by Jessica's side on deck stopped suddenly in the midst of an impassioned tribute to the character of Robert Bruce, looked in her face for an instant with eyes full of a horrible fear, and hastily joined a stout German in a spirited foot-race to the nearest companionway. A High-church English divine, who had met me half an hour before and had hastened to spare me future heart-aches by explaining at once that he was married, rose abruptly from his chair beside me and wobbled uncertainly to the deck-rail, where he hung suspended in an attitude of pathetic resignation. Thus recalled to the grim realities of life, Jessica and I looked up and down the deck. It was deserted—deserted save for a little black figure that trotted rapidly past us, clutching occasionally at the empty air for support as she was hurled from one side to the other of the glistening deck, but cheerful, undaunted, and happy.

"I got to have some exercise," panted Aunt Nancy, as she reclined for an instant in my lap, where a lurch of the ship had deposited her; "so I'm takin' a little walk." She was still walking when Jessica and I retreated hurriedly to our cabin.

The days that followed are too sad to be described by the most sympathetic pen. The sea, moved to her uttermost depths as she had not been in twenty-five years, resented fiercely the presence of the *Columbia* on her disturbed bosom. Madly she cast her from her; with feline treachery she drew her back again, and sought to tear apart her mighty timbers. Groaningly, agonizingly, pluckily, the *Columbia* bore all — and revenged herself on her passengers. She stood on her head, and sent them, so to speak, into her prow. She rose up on her stern, and scattered them aft. She stood still and shuddered. She lay down on her left side until she had imperilled the heart action of every person on board; she rolled over on her right side and started briskly toward the bottom of the sea. She recovered herself, leaped up and down a few times to prove that she was still intact, and did it all over again. Meanwhile the passengers, locked below and sternly command-

ed to keep to their cabins, held fast to the sides of their berths and prayed fervently for death.

Neither Jessica nor I was actively ill, but Jessica's indifference to food and social intercourse was marked in the extreme. Stretched on her back in the berth opposite my own, she lay day and night with closed eyes and forbidding demeanor, rousing herself only long enough to repel fiercely any suggestion that she take nourishment. Also, she funished me with one life-long memory. From sheer ennui I ordered and devoured at noon on the third day a large portion of steamed peach dumpling, with hard sauce. The look which Jessica cast first upon this dish and then upon me will always, I think, remain the dominant feature of my most troubled dreams.

During this time I had not forgotten Aunt Nancy, though I am sure Jessica had. Her cabin, however, while on the same deck as our own, was at the other end of the ship, and I had grave doubts of my ability to cover safely the distance between. Finally I attempted it, and, aside from the slight incidents of blacking one eye in an unexpected diversion to the rail, and subsequently being hurled violently against the back of an axe nailed to the wall, I made

the passage in safety. Aunt Nancy was not in her cabin, but a hollow groan from the upper berth betrayed the fact that her room-mate was. From this lady I was unfortunately unable to extract any information. She seemed to feel that I was mercifully sent to chloroform her out of existence, and her disappointment over my failure to play this Samaritan rôle was so bitter that I was forced to withdraw lest she should utter things unbefitting a gentlewoman.

Down the long corridor, as I groped my way back, something blew toward me like a wraith from the sea. It wore a gray, woolly bath-robe, a tiny wisp of white hair fastened precariously with one hair-pin, and a pair of knitted bedroom slippers. It was Aunt Nancy, and we executed then and there an intricate *pas de deux* in our common efforts to meet. Finally the *Columbia* ceased her individual evolutions long enough to enable us to grasp the passage-rail.

"I've been in your cabin," I explained, above the roar of wave and wind, as we stood facing each other. "I was afraid you were ill."

Aunt Nancy looked almost pained at such a suspicion.

"My, no," she disavowed, hastily; "but

there's them that is," she conceded. "I've been to see—let me see—thirty of 'em to-day—men an' women both. Poor Mr. Jackson's about the worst. I never *see* such a sick man. I got this cracked ice for him," she added, looking down at the glass she was clasping to her bosom with her free hand. "I'd 'a' looked in on you," she added, kindly, "if I hadn't been so busy, but I heard you wa'n't neither of you sick."

I explained with some effort that I felt comfortable as long as I lay still, but that as soon as I was on my feet, the motion— We parted hurriedly.

On the morning of the sixth day Jessica turned over in her berth, removed from her spine a fork which had seemingly been there all the week, regarded it with strong disfavor, and announced briefly that she was going above. We went. The decks were still wet, and the steamer-chairs were securely lashed in place. The sky was gray and lowering, but the sea had sulkily subsided, showing its continued resentment of the whole experience only in the upheaval of an occasional wave which broke over the ship-rail and perished at our feet. As the hours passed, pale wraiths appeared at the

companionways, supported one another feebly to the nearest chairs, sank into them, and veiled their faces from one another's gaze. They seemed the ghosts of the happy men and women who had come on board the *Columbia* six long days ago. Languidly as the hours passed they revived and confided to one another the simple record of the voyage. No, they had not been ill. It was, indeed, singular how few of them had been disturbed by the voyage, though they had all noticed that it was rough. But they had been injured by being knocked about or thrown from their berths, or they had been caring for friends or relatives who were ill. Several of them paused at my side on their way to and from their cabins to indulge in these artless confidences. It remained, however, for Aunt Nancy to make the most interesting of all.

She came along the deck about five in the afternoon and dropped with serene satisfaction into the empty steamer-chair at my right. She was fully dressed in the inevitable black, even to her wide bonnet. With a sigh of pleasure she folded her mittened hands and began to talk.

"It's been real interestin'," she said. "I must say I'm 'most sorry to have it over. I

want to go to Europe again in two years; I ain't really enjoyed this trip very much; but when I come again I think I'll like it better, now that I know it. But of course at my age one can't really be sure one can come again."

She sank into silence for a moment, looking down at the mittened hands in her lap. Then her face brightened, and she turned to me again with her old, alert eagerness of expression.

"I dunno why I shouldn't come, though," she added, cheerfully. "I'm real well. Before I left home I was some worried. I didn't seem to be as strong as I used to be. That's why I come—to build up my health an' git strong. Lots of folks has wondered why I come, I guess, an' that was it, though I ain't told no one till now. I guess I did improve, too, for the stewardess told me with her own lips only this mornin' that she thought I was a healthy woman. But of course," she added, with lowly humility, "I can't do what I did when I was young."

I was speechless. The *Columbia* paused on the top of a wave, hesitated a moment, and sailed unsteadily onward. With eyes filled with a solemn content, Aunt Nancy gazed out over the cold, wet sea.

IX

THE HENRY SMITHS' HONEYMOON

WHEN Jacob West suggested to Henry Smith that the latter's honeymoon should be spent in New York, Mr. Smith's ruddy countenance paled at the audacity of the words, and Miss Maria Tuttle, his *fiancée*, gasped audibly for breath. Unconsciously they clasped hands, as if better to meet together the rude shock of the moment; and seated side by side on the rustic bench which adorned the small veranda of the Tuttle homestead, they gazed helplessly at the speaker. Slowly and with the stiffness of age Jacob sat down on the steps below them and looked up at their startled faces with a twinkle in his dim old eyes. His enjoyment of the moment was intense.

"Why not?" he demanded, cajolingly and argumentatively. "Ain't yeh old enough t' have a good time? Ain't yeh waited long enough? Ain't yeh"—he turned directly to

Maria—"bin nursin' yer poor mother fer six years past an' wearin' yerself out, an' ain't yeh bin sewin' day an' night fer three months, ever sence she died, t' git ready t' marry Henry?" He drew a long breath of gratification over the respectful silence which greeted these adroit points, and went on with hortatory sympathy. "Yeh bin a good daughter, Maria. They ain't no better in Clayton Centre. Yeh deserve th' best they is. Now be good t' yerself an' Henry. Let him take yeh to New York an' give yeh a good time on the weddin' tower."

Miss Tuttle blushed faintly. She was forty-five, and looked ten years older. She was a tired, worn out, faded little woman, drained of her youth and vitality by the hourly exactions of the fault-finding invalid mother whom she had so recently laid away in the church-yard with unselfish filial tears. But there was something attractive in the sweet patience of her thin face, and the look in her brown eyes as she turned them on her faithful middle-aged lover was one of the trump cards her sex has played since Eve first used it as she accompanied Adam to the gate out of paradise. In her embarrassment she laughed a little, consciously.

"Mebbe Henry don't want to go," she began. "He ain't said nothing about New York."

Henry whirled abruptly till he faced her on the rustic seat.

"Go! You bet I want to go!" he ejaculated, with fervor. "Don't I just—you bet I do. Say, Maria"—he fumbled nervously with the thin hand he still held in his own—"say, let's go."

Jacob West cackled delightedly. "That's the talk!" he cried, his thin, high tones taking on a shriller note in his excitement. "You jest do it, Henry! You make her! Neither of yeh'll be sorry, I swan!"

They sat silent, reflecting, and the old fellow rose slowly and painfully, instinctive delicacy telling him that, having done his part, it behooved him to leave them alone to solve for themselves the question he had raised. It was hard to go, but he went, chuckling reminiscently as he recalled the excited look on their faces and pictured the lively debate which would follow his departure.

It was a warm October evening, and the little village lay silent under the early stars. A light wind sang a droning lullaby in the grove of pines back of the Tuttle home, and a few

belated birds twittered sleepily in near-by trees. Unconsciously Maria voiced the subtle charm of the hour when she spoke.

"I dunno, Henry," she said, lingeringly—"I dunno 's I feel to go. Seems like we ought to be content to stay right here, where it's so quiet an' restful."

Her eyes roamed lovingly down the garden paths, lingering on trees and shrubs planted by Tuttle hands now a part of earth themselves. "I'm so glad you're comin' here," she sighed, happily. "I don't b'lieve you know yet how glad I am, Henry—not t' leave the old place."

He waived the discussion of this side interest, already settled between them.

"It 'll be jest as nice when we come back from New York," he argued, logically, "an' jest as quiet."

The feminine intellect beside him took another tack on the sea of uncertainty with which old Jacob had surrounded it.

"Mebbe we can't afford it," she hazarded. "Prices is very high in New York, Henry. Joseph Hadley's daughter went there four years ago with her aunt, and she told me with her own lips they had to pay a dollar a day for their room at the hotel, without no meals.

The hotel man wanted seventy-five cents apiece for dinner, so they paid it once a day an' the rest of the time they went into lunch-rooms an' had milk an' crackers. But with one dollar for the room, and another dollar 'n' a half for dinner, an' the crackers an' milk besides, they spent 'most twenty dollars the very first week. They had to come right straight home, 'n' they'd meant to stay two weeks."

Henry Smith's strong jaw set rather obstinately.

"I guess we won't have to come home till we git ready," he remarked, easily, "an' I guess we'll git our three meals a day, too. I don't see myself eatin' no milk an' crackers, nor you, neither. I guess I 'ain't bin savin' all these years, with a good carpenter business, without gittin' somethin' ahead. Say, 'Ria" — it was he who blushed now, his round face close to hers—"yeh can have anything yeh want. I'm that glad t' git yeh at last, I'd spend all I have!"

Her thin hand responded for an instant to the pressure of his and then coyly withdrew itself. She had few words at any time and none in moments of emotion, but he knew her and was satisfied.

"You've bin so good, Henry," she said, at

last; "you've bin awful patient all these years. Fur's I'm concerned, I'd as lief stay here 's anywhere, but if you want to go t' New York, I—I—want to do what yeh say."

"Then we'll go," he said, quietly; and the great question was settled.

When Mr. and Mrs. Henry Smith arrived in New York on the evening of their wedding-day, it is doubtful which of them was the more dazed and frightened by the bustle and confusion at the Grand Central station. Maria had at least the support of her husband's nearness to sustain her, and the comparative peace of mind of the one who, though facing untoward conditions, is without personal responsibility; but Henry experienced, in addition to his self-distrust, a sickening fear of failure in her presence. He was conscious of two dominant thoughts. Whatever happened, he must take care of his wife and spurn the advances of agreeable strangers. Also he and she must be transported by hack to the hotel they had chosen, without parting with the savings of years for the ride. He had heard of the extortions of cabmen. He bargained fiercely with a too-zealous independent who had already grasped his hand-bag and was leading

the way to his cab, past the more inexpensive cabs supplied by the railroad company.

"You don't git one cent more'n two dollars for taking us, I can tell you that," announced Henry Smith, firmly but breathlessly, as he climbed clumsily into the cab after his wife. The hotel was in the fifties, and the cabman had intended to charge a dollar for the ride. He promptly protested against Mr. Smith's offer, however, inquiring anxiously if the gentleman wished an honest cabman's family to go supperless to bed. It appeared that the gentleman was indifferent to the fate of the cabman's family.

"You'll do it for two dollars or you'll let us git out," was his final word. As one overcome by superior force, the cabman yielded, climbed sulkily to his perch, and, bestowing a large, comprehensive wink upon the by-standers, started for the hotel his fare had indicated. Mr. Smith's spirits rose. Obviously, in this triumph he had demonstrated his fitness to cope with all the other grinding monopolies of New York. He smiled proudly at his wife as they drove toward Broadway, and his confidence grew as he discovered that he recognized the *Times* Building at the first glance and could also

recognize the Hotel Astor by its resemblance to the picture of it in the *Clayton Centre Weekly*. At one point in their progress up-town the cab was caught in a crush of vehicles and Mrs. Henry Smith was privileged, for the first time in her life, to listen to the untrammelled conversation of New York cabmen on an occasion when they set their moral shoulders against congested traffic, knowing that it helps *them*, at all events. She shuddered and clung to Henry's arm. It was all too plain that they were in the vortex of godlessness, but even as the realization of this was borne to her on the winged speech of the driver, Mrs. Smith was conscious of an inward thrill. It was awful, but it was life—not life as lived in Clayton Centre, but certainly a life that already gained in excitement and interest from that fact. Unconsciously craning her thin neck farther out of the cab window, she drank in with a fearful joy the roar and excitement of Broadway, the shouts of drivers, the clang of trolley-cars. Her faded eyes gleamed as she saw the brilliant lights of the great thoroughfare whose illuminated signs met her glance at every turn.

Arrived at the hotel, the cabman accepted the two dollars, dumped the bride's trunk on

the sidewalk, and drove off with an alacrity designed to prevent any further discussion of rates. Mr. Smith surrendered his hand-bag to the bell-boy who was reaching out impatient hands for it, grasped his wife's arm, and, following his small guide, walked firmly into the presence of the hotel clerk. It was a trying moment for him as he dragged that aloof personality down to his level, but details were arranged with surprising ease, barring so strange a lack of sympathy. As soon as he had expressed his few and simple wishes he found himself and his wife being guided to a lift, and with wonderful simplicity put in possession of a comfortable room on the third floor. Here the shades were drawn down, a pitcher of ice-water was hospitably placed on the stand, and a cheery fire was started on the small hearth. Over this last extravagance the bride faintly demurred, but Henry silenced her with his simple grandeur of insistence. It was a cool November evening, and he had noticed that she shivered in her thin wrap as they drove up-town.

"I jest intend makin' yeh comfortable," he announced, masterfully.

It was something of an ordeal to go down to

dinner half an hour later, but they met it bravely, walking stiffly into the crowded dining-room, and looking to neither the right nor the left as they followed the headwaiter to their places. The discovery that they had exclusive possession of a small table was a matter of joyful surprise to them both, on which they freely commented. The daintiness of the linen, the gleam of silver, the perfection of the service, and the soft glow of candles under silk shades, filled their simple country souls with awe. It suggested unconjectured expense with a tang of wickedness as well. Off in an alcove, screened by palms, an orchestra played with considerate softness. Mr. Smith smiled a large, expansive smile and leaned back in his chair. The moment was perfect. His apprehensions were over for the time. Maria was with him, she was his, and he was giving her all this. Could an Astor or a Vanderbilt offer more to the woman of his heart? Henry Smith looked at the plush and gilding about him, and read his answer.

He experienced a rude awakening. A silent waiter stood beside him, offering for his inspection an elaborate menu. The letters danced before his eyes as Henry looked at them. What did they mean, anyhow, and how did one pick

out what one wanted, he wondered. Or, perchance, was one expected gracefully to consume everything? His momentary self-sufficiency died on the instant, and sickening fears of making a mistake before Maria's eyes again overcame him. A great longing filled him to appear to advantage, to do the thing properly, whatever it was. On a sudden inspiration he leaned toward the waiter.

"Say," he said, confidentially, "you jest bring us two good dinners—the best of everything you've got—and I'll make it all right with yeh." He surveyed the waiter's face anxiously as he spoke, his own clearing as it remained quietly respectful.

"Very well, sir; certainly, sir," said the servant, promptly. "Oysters first, sir, I suppose, and a little green-turtle soup; a bit of fish, perhaps—we've some very nice sole in today, sir; a bird—the partridge and grouse are excellent, sir; a salad, and an ice. Any wine, sir? No, sir? Yes, sir." He was gone, and Mr. Smith wiped his perspiring brow. Maria was gazing at him with simple love and trust.

"I declare, Henry," she murmured, "you do it all just 's if you'd be'n doin' it every day of your life. Where'd you learn?"

Mr. Smith made a vague gesture repudiating the charge, but his face shone and he sat straighter in his chair. He dared not boast, for he knew there were crucial moments coming, but so far there had been no catastrophes and his courage grew with each achievement. When Maria looked doubtfully at her oysters, and, joyfully recognizing them, wondered audibly why they were not made into a stew instead of being presented in this semi-nude condition, he was able, after a piercing glance at near-by tables, to set her right with easy authority.

"They eat 'em this way in New York," he said, swallowing one himself and endeavoring, with indifferent success, to look as if he liked it. Maria followed his example, rather gingerly and not as one who ventures on a new joy. Her interest remained equally vague when the soup and fish successively appeared. When the partridge was served, however, with bread sauce and French pease and currant jelly, the gratifying experience of finally "having something really on the plate" moved her to alert appreciation, and she proceeded to eat her dinner with an expression of artless and wholesouled relief. She was able to point out to Henry, as a bit of prandial small-talk, that the

orchestra was playing "Nancy Brown"—a classic ditty whose notes had reached even Clayton Centre. It was at this stimulating point of the dinner, also, that she felt privileged for the first time to remove her gloves, glance at the other tables and the clothes of the women, and talk freely to her husband. Hitherto she had "conversed" under pressure.

The waiter, offering her a second helping of jelly, saw, shining in her hair, several grains of rice. The discovery exhilarated but did not surprise him. His mien was one of fatherly interest five minutes later as he presented a small bottle for Mr. Smith's inspection.

"Champagne, sir," he murmured. "Not too dry for the lady's taste, sir. Thought you'd like a glass—special occasion, sir—"

His eloquence died away under the startled look in the bride's eyes, but the groom met his happy suggestion with warm approval.

"Jest the thing," he said, heartily. "It 'll do you good, Maria. Doctors give it when people ain't well, so you can take it 'thout any fear. 'N' I guess you're feelin' pretty well, ain't you?" he grinned, broadly, over this flash of humor.

He motioned to the waiter to fill her glass,

and that worthy did so and retired behind her to give his courteous attention to the effect.

They drank their champagne, and a faint color came to Maria's pale cheeks. It was really a nice place, this hotel, she decided, and the furnishing of this room was such as palaces might cope with in vain. She had heard of their glories; now she could guess what those glories were. The voices of other guests chatting around her mingled with the music; Clayton Centre seemed very remote. At last she was seeing life.

She felt no embarrassment as they left the table. They strolled slowly down the dining-room and out into the palm-lined corridor on whose plush chairs handsome men and beautifully dressed women sat and chatted with surprising volubility and ease. Intrepidly the newcomers seated themselves side by side where they could listen to the music and watch the strange beings in this strange world. They were out of it all, and even in the exhilaration of the moment they knew it; but their aloofness from others added to the charm of the evening by drawing them closer together. They gloried in the joint occupation of their little island of happiness. For a long time they sat

there, for Maria could not be torn away. The music, the costumes and beauty of the women, the delicate perfumes, the frequent ringing of bells, the hurrying back and forth of bell-boys and hotel servants, were indescribably fascinating to her.

The next morning Mr. Smith, sternly recalling himself to the material side of life, had a brief but pregnant chat with the clerk. He and his wife wished to stay a few days at the hotel, he intimated, but it would be advisable, before making their plans, to go somewhat into the question of expense. How much, for instance, was their dinner last night. He had signed a check, but his memory was hazy as to the amount. His brain reeled when the clerk, having looked it up, gave him the figures—$10.85.

"Good Lord!" gasped Mr. Henry Smith. "I guess we'd better go back to-day ef it's goin' to be *that* much!"

He was too limp mentally to follow for a time the clerks remarks, but light gradually broke upon him. He could henceforth take *table d'hôte* meals, paying sixty cents each for breakfast and luncheon for himself and his wife, and one dollar each for their dinner. That would

be only four dollars and forty cents a day for all meals—and would make the hotel bills much less than if one ordered by card, unless one was —er—familiar with the prices. It was much less trouble, too. Mr. Smith grasped the point and expansively shook the clerk's hand. His relief was so great that he urged that youth to have a cigar, and the youth in return volunteered information as to points of interest to strangers in New York.

"Better do the town to-day," he suggested. "Just go round and get a general view—Broadway, Fifth Avenue, the shops, and all that. Then to-night you'd better go to the play. I think you'd enjoy 'The White Cat' as much as anything."

Armed with definite information as to the most direct route to Broadway, Mr. Smith sought his bride. He found her in the corridor, watching the people come and go, her thin face flushed and animated.

"Oh, Henry," she cried, eagerly, "I declare I'm having the most interestin' time! Those folks over there—you know, the ones that has the room next to ours—ain't spoke to each other sence breakfast. Do you think they've quarrelled, the poor dears?"

He gave but perfunctory attention to "the poor dears," his duties as prospective cicerone filling his thoughts. Maria's face fell as he outlined their plans for the day.

"Well, if you feel to go, Henry," she said, doubtfully, "but it's *so* interestin' here. I feel 's if I knew all these folks. I wish we could stay here this mornin', anyhow, 'n' not git out in those dreadful crowded streets jest yet."

He sat down beside her with a promptness which evoked a startled shriek from an absorbed young person reading near them.

"Then we'll stay right here," he announced, kindly. "We're here, 'Ria, to do jest what you want, an' we're goin' to do it."

She gave him an adoring look, and under its radiance Mr. Smith promptly forgot the small claims of Broadway. Siberia with Maria in it would have blossomed like the rose for Henry Smith, and the wide, cheerful corridors of the Berkeley were far removed from Siberia's atmosphere. Side by side and blissfully happy, they whiled the morning hours away. After luncheon Henry again tentatively touched on sight-seeing.

"'Tain't far," he said. He consulted the slip of directions the clerk had given him, and went

on expansively, "We take the cross-town line at Fifty-ninth Street, transfer to a Broadway car—"

Maria shivered. "My, Henry," she quavered, "that sounds dreadful mixed. I'm afraid we'll get lost."

Henry's own soul was full of dark forebodings, and he inwardly welcomed the respite her words gave him.

"Well, then, don't let's go," he said, easily, "till to-morrow, anyhow. We got plenty o' time. We'll stay here, an' to-night we'll go to see a play."

Like the morning, the afternoon passed sweetly. Henry made the discovery that the hotel café at the right of the reception-room was a popular resort for men guests of the hotel, and his researches into their pleasures led to an introduction to a Manhattan cocktail. He returned to Maria's side an ardent convert to her theory that the hotel was the pleasantest place in New York. Subsequently, as he sampled a Martini, one or two men chatted with him for a moment, giving him a delightful sense of easy association with his peers. Maria, in the mean time, had formed a pleasing acquaintance with the parlor maid, and had talked freely to sev-

eral little children. It was with reluctance that they tore themselves away from the corridor long enough to go in to dinner.

The *table d'hôte* dinner, served in another room, was much less elaborate than the banquet of the night before, but neither of them realized the difference. Good in itself, to them it was perfection, and Maria recognized almost as old friends familiar faces of fellow hotel guests at the tables around her. When the question of the theatre came up she was distinctly chilling.

"We'll go if you want to, Henry," she said, "but the band's goin' to play all evening, an' the maid said some of the young folks has got up a dance in the little ball-room. Wouldn't you like to see it?"

Henry decided that he would. He had, in fact, no rabid wish to see a play, and the prospect of piloting Maria safely to the centre of the town and home was definitely strenuous. He drank another cocktail after dinner, smoked a cigar with a Western travelling man, exchanged sage views on politics with that gentleman, and happily spent the remainder of the evening by his Maria's side, watching the whirling young things in the small ball-room. The

happiest of them were sad, indeed, compared with Henry Smith.

The next morning the cheerful voice of the clerk greeted him as he came from the dining-room.

"Where to-day, Mr. Smith?" inquired that affable youth. "How about the Horse Show? You surely ought to look in on that." He wrote on a card explicit directions for arriving at the scene of this diversion, and Mr. Smith, gratefully accepting it, hastened to his bride's side. He found her full of another project.

"Oh, Henry," she cried, "they's going to be a lecture here in the hotel this mornin', by a lady that's been to Japan. All the money she gets for tickets will go to the poor. I guess she'll ask as much as twenty-five cents apiece, but I think we better go."

Sustained by a cocktail, and strengthened by the presence of his Maria, Mr. Smith attended the lecture, cheerfully paying two dollars for the privilege, but refraining from dampening his wife's joy by mentioning the fact. In the afternoon he broached the Horse Show. Maria's face paled. To her it meant an exaggerated county fair, with its attendant fatigue.

"You go, Henry," she urged. "You jest go

an' enjoy yourself. I feel too tired—I really do. I'd ruther stay home—here—an' rest. We don't really have to do nothing we don't want to, do we?"

Honest Henry Smith, whose working-day in Clayton Centre began at five in the morning and ended at six at night, and whose evenings were usually spent in the sleep of utter exhaustion, found himself relaxing deliciously under her words. It was good, very good, to rest, and to know they didn't *have* to do things unless they wished.

"I won't, neither, go alone," he announced. "I ain't anxious to go. I'd ruther stay here with you. We'll go some other time."

The white-capped maid smiled as she passed them; the palms nodded as to old friends. The seductive charms of the Berkeley corridors again wrapped them round.

"Going to see some of the pictures to-day?" asked the clerk, on the third morning, cheerfully doing his duty by the strangers as he conceived it. "Better go to Central Park first and the Metropolitan Museum, then to the private exhibitions. Here's the list. Take a cross-town car to Fifth Avenue, and a 'bus to Eighty-first Street, and after the Park a

Fifth Avenue 'bus will drop you at the other places."

Apprehension settled over Henry Smith, rudely disturbing his lotos-eater's sense of being. He felt almost annoyed by this well-meaning but indefatigable young man who seemed to think folks should be gadding all the time. His manner was unresponsive as he took the addresses.

"I'll see what my wife says," he remarked, indifferently.

His wife said what he believed and hoped she would say.

"We ain't goin' home till to-morrow afternoon," she observed, "an' we can see Central Park to-morrow mornin' if we want to. They's a woman here that does up hair for fifty cents, an' I thought if yeh didn't mind, Henry, I'd have her do mine—"

Henry urged her to carry out this happy inspiration. "She can't make yeh look any nicer, though," he added, gallantly. Then, as Maria surrendered herself and their room to the hairdresser's ministrations, he visited the bar, chatted with his friend the clerk, and smoked a good cigar. Afterward he selected a comfortable chair in the corridor where he was to meet

Maria, stretched his long legs, dozed, and found it good to be alive.

A befrizzled Maria, whose scant hair stood out in startling Marcel waves, confronted him at luncheon-time. A sudden inspiration shook him to his depths.

"Don't you want to go down-town and have your picture took?" he urged. "Let's have ours done together."

Maria was proof against even this lure. She had a better idea.

"They's a photograph man right here in the hotel," she chirped, joyously. "He's next to the flower-shop, an' we can go right in through that little narrow hall."

They went, subsequently carrying home with them as their choicest treasure the cabinet photograph for which they had posed side by side, with the excitement of New York life shining in their honest eyes. In the evening the clerk suggested a concert.

"It's a fine one, at Carnegie Hall, right near here," he urged, cheerfully, "and Sembrich is to sing, with the Symphony Orchestra. You can get in for fifty cents if you don't mind sitting in the gallery. You really ought to go, Mrs. Smith; you would enjoy it."

Mrs. Smith turned upon him an anxious eye.

"How far did you say 'twas?" she asked, warily.

"Oh, not ten minutes' ride. You take the car here at the corner—"

But the mention of the car blighted the budding purpose in Maria's soul.

"I feel real tired," she said, quickly, "but if my husband wants to go—"

Her husband loudly disavowed any such aspiration.

"We got a long journey before us to-morrow," he said, "an' I guess we better rest."

They rested in the Berkeley corridor, amid the familiar sights and scenes. The following morning found them equally disinclined for sight-seeing. Seated in their favorite chairs, they watched the throngs of happy people who came and went around them. Henry had added to the list of his acquaintances two more travelling men and the boy at the news-counter. His wife had heard in detail the sad story of her chambermaid's life, and a few facts and surmises about fellow-guests at the hotel.

Maria drew a long sigh when, after they had paid their bill the next day and bade farewell to the clerk and other new friends, they climbed

into the cab which was to take them to the station.

"My, but it was interestin'!" she said, softly; adding, with entire conviction, "Henry, I 'ain't never had such a good time in my hull life! I really 'ain't!"

"Neither have I," avowed Henry, truthfully. "Wasn't it jest bully!"

On the train a sudden thought occurred to Mrs. Smith.

"Henry," she began, uneasily, "s'pose any one asks what we've *seen* in New York. What 'll we tell 'em? You know, somehow we didn't seem t' git time t' see much."

Henry Smith was equal to the emergency.

"We'll say we seen so much we can't remember it," he said, shamelessly. "Don't you worry one bit about that, Maria Smith. I've always heard that weddin' couples don't never really see nothin' on their weddin' towers, anyhow—they gad an' gad, an' it don't do no good. We was wiser not to try!"

X

THE CASE OF KATRINA

MY memory of Katrina goes back to the morning when, at the tender age of ten, she was violently precipitated into our classroom. The motive power, we subsequently learned, was her brother Jacob, slightly older than Katrina, whose nervous system had abruptly refused the ordeal of accompanying her into the presence of the teacher. Pushing the door ajar until the opening was just large enough to admit her, he thrust her through, following her fat figure for a second with one anxious eye and breathing audibly in his excitement. The next instant the cheerful clatter of his hob-nailed boots echoed down the hall, followed by a whoop of relief as he emerged upon the playground.

It was Katrina's bearing as she stood, thus rudely projected into our lives, endeavoring to recover her equilibrium, and with thirty pairs

of eyes fixed unswervingly upon her, that won my heart and Jessica's. Owing to a fervid determination of our teacher to keep us well in view, we sat in the front row, directly facing her. Having, even in our extreme youth, a constitutional distaste to missing anything, we undoubtedly stared at Katrina longer and harder than any of the others. We smiled, too, largely and with the innocent abandon of childhood; and Katrina smiled back at us as if she also tasted a subtle flavor of the joke, lost to cruder palates. Then she shifted her tiny school-bag from one hand to the other, swept the room with a thoughtful glance, and catching sight of frantic gestures I was making, obeyed them by walking casually to an empty seat across from my own, where she sat down with deepening dimples and an air of finality.

Several moments subsequently our teacher, Miss Merrill, aroused herself from the trance into which she apparently had been thrown by the expeditiousness with which this incident was accomplished, and coming to Katrina's side, ratified the arrangement, incidentally learning the new pupil's name and receiving from her hand a card, written by the principal and assigning her to our special grade. But long be-

fore these insignificant details were completed, Jessica and I had emptied Katrina's bag, arranged her books in her desk, lent her a pencil she lacked, indicated to her the boy most to be scorned and shunned, given her in pantomime the exact standing of Miss Merrill in the regard of her pupils, and accepted in turn the temporary loan of the spruce-gum with which she had happily provided herself. At recess the acquaintance thus auspiciously begun ripened into a warm friendship, and on the way home from school that night we made a covenant of eternal loyalty and love, and told one another the stories of our lives.

Jessica's and mine were distressingly matter-of-fact. We were both supplied with the usual complement of parents, brothers, and sisters, and, barring the melancholy condition that none of them, of course, understood our complex natures, we had nothing unusual to chronicle. But Katrina's recital was of an interest. She was, to begin with, an orphan, living with two brothers and an old uncle in a large and gloomy house we had often noticed as it stood with its faded back turned coldly to Evans Avenue. Seemingly her pleasures and friends were few. Once a month she went to the

cemetery to put flowers on her father's and mother's graves. Katrina herself seemed uncertain as to whether this pilgrimage properly belonged in the field of pleasure or the stern path of duty; but Jessica and I classified it at once, and dropped an easy tear. We hoped her uncle was grim and stern, and did not give her enough to eat. This, we felt, would have made the melancholy picture of Katrina's condition most satisfyingly complete. But when we sought eagerly for such details, Katrina, with shameless indifference to dramatic possibilities, painted for us an unromantic, matter-of-fact old German, kind to her when he remembered her existence, but submerged in his library and in scientific research. We further learned that they ate five meals a day at Katrina's home, with "coffee" and numerous accompaniments in between. Moreover, Katrina's school-bag bulged at the sides with German cakes of various shapes and composition. Our stern disapproval of these was tempered in time by the fact that she freely shared them with us. We were not surprised to discover also, though these revelations came later, that the old housekeeper had difficulty in keeping buttons on the child's frocks, and that Katrina was addicted to

surreptitious consumption of large cucumber pickles behind her geography in school hours. These were small faults of an otherwise beautiful nature, and stimulating to our youthful fancy in the possibilities they suggested. Unquestioningly we accepted Katrina as a being to be loved, pitied, and spared the ruder shocks of life. Lovingly we sharpened her pencils, cheerfully we covered her books, unenthusiastically but patiently we wrote her compositions; for Katrina's mind worked slowly, and literature was obviously not her forte. In return, Katrina blossomed and existed and shed on us the radiance of a smile which illumined the dim school-room even as her optimistic theories of life leavened our infant pessimism.

Time swept us on, out of childhood schoolrooms into the dignified shades of the academy, and Katrina developed from a fat little girl with yellow braids into a plump young person with a rather ordinary complexion, some taste in dress, and a really angelic smile. As a possible explanation of her lack of interest in intellectual pursuits, she explained to us that she continued to attend school only because her uncle suggested nothing else. Whatever the reason, we were glad to have her there; and

though we still did most of her work, and she carefully refrained from burdening her mind with academic knowledge, the tie between us was strengthened, if anything, by the fact. Jessica and I were already convinced that more was being put into us than two small heads could hold. It was a grateful as well as a friendly task to pass the surplus on to Katrina.

When we were seventeen, Jessica and I were told that we were to be sent East to college, and Katrina's uncle, first stimulating thought by pushing his spectacles back upon his brow, decided that she was already sufficiently burdened by education, and that the useful arts of the *Hausfrau* should engage her attention forthwith. She should keep house for him and her brothers, he announced, until she carried out her proper mission in life by marrying and having babies. With this oracular utterance he closed further discussion by burying himself once more in his library, while Katrina came to tell us his decision.

She had looked forward to the pleasing social aspects of college life, so she seemed slightly disappointed, did Katrina, and the end of her nose held certain high lights. But aside from this evidence of sorrow she made no protest against

the peremptory masculine shaping of her future. Stricken to the heart, Jessica and I stormed, begged, implored, wept. Katrina opposed to our eloquence the impassive front of a pink sofa-cushion.

"My uncle says it," she sighed, and was silent.

Jessica and I were not the natures to remain inactive at such a crisis. We appealed to her brothers, who promptly declined to express any opinion in the matter beyond a general conviction that their uncle was right in all things. Baffled, we proceeded to beard the uncle in his den. We found him wearing worn carpet slippers, a faded dressing-gown, a serene expression, and an air of absorption in science which did not materially lift at our approach. He listened to us patiently, however, greeting our impassioned climaxes with long-drawn "ach so's," which Jessica subsequently confided to me brought to birth in her the first murderous impulse of a hitherto blameless life. Once we experienced high hopes, when Jessica, whose conscience had seemingly not accompanied us to the conference, dwelt feelingly on Katrina's unusual intellectual achievements at the academy. Her uncle grew very grave at this, and

his "ach so's" rolled about in the bare old library like echoes of distant thunder.

"Ach, that is bad," he sighed; "I did not think it; I was careless. I should have taken her away sooner, is it not so? But she will quickly forget—yes, yes." His face cleared. "It will do her no harm," he went on. "It is not good that the women know too much. *Kirche, Kinder, und Kuchen*—that is best for them. Ach, yes."

There being obviously little to gain by prolonging this painful discussion, Jessica and I bore our outraged sensibilities to the calming atmosphere of our homes. And in due time, our trunks being packed and our farewells said, we departed to apply our thirsty lips to the fountain of knowledge flowing at the Eastern college, leaving Katrina to embark upon her domestic career.

Time and distance, we reminded Katrina, could be bridged by letters, and Katrina responded nobly to the hint. She wrote every day at first, and we consumed most of our waking hours in inditing our replies. There seemed, indeed, little else to engage our attention in a community which was experiencing great difficulty in recalling our names and was

in heathen darkness as to our brilliant achievements at the academy. As time passed, however, we grew more busy. For a few months the necessity of asserting our individuality to an extent which would at least prevent our being trodden upon in the halls engaged our attention, and after that a conscientious imitation of loved ones in the Junior class occupied much time.

The great news of Katrina's engagement fanned into a fierce flame the warm embers of our friendship. Oh, joy, oh romance, oh, young, young love! We wrote Katrina forty pages of congratulations, and Katrina coyly but fully replied. We could almost see her rosy blushes as she bent over the pages of her long letters to us. Her future lord was a German, a professor in the Lutheran college in our native city, and, it seemed, though Katrina dwelt but lightly on the fact, somewhat past the first fine flush of youth. So much Katrina naïvely conveyed to us, with the further information that the wedding was to be early in February, because Professor von Heller, the happy bridegroom, seemed unaccountably to be in haste, and had bought a home, to which he was anxious to take her.

There was much in all this to arouse our girlish enthusiasm; the charms of our beloved Juniors paled into temporary insignificance as we followed Katrina's love-affair. We could not go home for the wedding, for reasons which seemed sufficient to the faculty, and this was a bitter blow. But we spent more than we could afford on the wedding-present we sent Katrina, and we still occupied most of our waking hours writing to her.

The wedding, according to Katrina's account, was in the nature of a brilliant social function. She found time during her honeymoon to write us lengthy accounts of its splendors. She obviously had taken considerable satisfaction in the presence of the entire faculty of Professor von Heller's college and in the effect of her gown, which was of white satin, with orange-blossoms. She also sent us a box of her wedding-cake, some of which we ate and upon the rest of which we conscientiously slumbered, experiencing horrible nightmares. Then, as the weeks passed, her letters became less frequent, and we, in turn, whirling in the maelstrom of spring examinations, gave to her paradise the tribute of an occasional envious thought and respected her happy silence.

When we went home for our summer vacation our first caller, most properly, was Katrina. She was a subdued, rather chastened Katrina, whose thoughtful, slightly puzzled expression might have suggested to maturer minds that some, at least, of the vaunted joys of domestic life had thus far escaped her. She urged us to come to her at once—the next day, in fact—and we accepted her invitation with the alacrity it deserved. We could not dine with her, we explained, as Jessica's sister had thoughtlessly made another engagement for us; but we would come at two and remain until after five, unbosoming ourselves of the year's experiences in a long talk and listening to the wisdom that flowed from Katrina's lips.

The next day was very beautiful, and Jessica and I, casting off a haunting suspicion of our individual unimportance which we had not quite succeeded in leaving behind us at college, expanded joyfully, and lent ourselves to the charms of a sunlit world. The Lutheran fount of knowledge was on the edge of the city, and Katrina's home was a short distance beyond it. It was quite a country place, this home, over the big, bare lawn of which an iron dog fiercely mounted guard. A weather-beaten house con-

fronted us, with a cold, forbidding expression. We felt chilled as we opened the gate, but Katrina presented herself at the first click of its latch, and her welcome was so hospitable and eager that our temporary constraint vanished. Simultaneously we fell upon her neck; loudly we assured her of our envious delight; noisily we trooped into her hall. As we entered it, a large, cheerful room confronted us. Through its open door we could see soft, leather-covered easy-chairs and big windows overlooking distant hills. Jessica started toward this, but Katrina checked her with a gentle touch.

"Not there," she said, gravely; "that is my husband's study, and he may come in any moment. *This* is our sitting-room."

She opened another door as she spoke, and we followed her dazedly across the threshold into a space which, properly utilized, might have made a comfortable single sleeping-room. It was quite seven feet by nine and had one window, looking out on a dingy barn. The painted floor was partly covered by a rug. Katrina's zither stood stiffly in a corner, three chairs backed themselves sternly against the wall. Katrina indicated two of these, and dropped on the third with her radiant smile.

"We use this as the sitting-room," she remarked, casually, "because my husband needs plenty of light and space when he works. Oh, my dear girls!" she broke out; "you don't know how glad I am to see you! Tell me everything that has happened since we met—all about college and your friends there."

As she spoke, there was the sound of heavy footsteps in the hall, followed by the noisy opening and shutting of a door. The pushing about of chairs in the next room and the drop of a heavy body into one of them suggested that the professor was at home and in his study. Katrina corroborated this surmise.

"My husband," she murmured, with a little blush. "He is early to-day."

The words were drowned by a roar.

"Katrina," bellowed a bass voice of startling depth, "bring my slippers!"

Katrina rose on the instant.

"You will excuse me?" she said, hastily. "Talk till I come back."

We did not talk, having some abysmal suspicion that if we talked we might say something. I gazed steadily at a little German picture on the wall—one I had given our hostess years before—and Jessica hummed a college-

song under her breath. We heard Katrina's feet fly up-stairs, down again, and into the study. Almost immediately she returned to us, her cheeks pink from her exertions.

"Now," she began, "I want to hear all about it—the nicest teachers, the chums who have taken my place."

The voice in the next room boomed out again.

"Ka-tri-na!" it bellowed. "My pipe! It is up-stairs."

Katrina departed for the pipe. Jessica and I indulged in the luxury of a long, comprehending gaze into the depths of each other's eyes. Katrina returned, and we all talked at once; for five minutes reminiscences and confidences flowed with the freedom of a mountain stream after a thaw.

"Ka-tri-na!"

Katrina sat still. She was listening to the end of Jessica's best story, but one willing foot went forward tentatively.

"Ka-tri-na!" Katrina should have heard that call though she lay with folded hands beside her mother 'neath the church-yard mould.

"Katrina, get me Haeckel's *Wonders of Life!*"

Katrina got it, by the simple and effective process of going into the room where the pro-

fessor sat and taking it from its shelf. We heard the soft murmur of her voice, followed by the rumble of his. When she returned to us, Jessica finished her story in the chastened spirit which follows such an interruption, and there were ten minutes of talk. We forgot the bare little room; old memories softly enfolded us; the Katrina we knew and loved dominated the situation.

"Ka-tri-na!"

Katrina's soft lips were not smiling now, but she rose at once, and with a murmured apology left the room. We heard the suggestion of the rest of her task as she closed the door.

"Where is that box of pens I got last week?"

Apparently their lurking-place was a distant one; Katrina's absence was long. When she returned, she volunteered to show us the house. We surmised that her desire was to get away from the sound of that summoning voice, and even as we rose we realized the futility of such an effort.

The dining-room, into which she led us for cake and tea, was almost comfortable. Its furniture, dark, serviceable oak, was a gift, Katrina told us, from her uncle. Twice as she served the tea she responded to a summons

from the professor's study. Once he desired a handkerchief, and the second time he wished an important letter posted at once. His wife went out to the rural box which adorned the fence in front of the house and cast the envelope into its yawning mouth. Returning, she showed us her kitchen, an immaculate spot, the floor of which was evidently scrubbed by her own hands, for she mentioned that she employed no servant.

"Hans thinks we do not need one," she added, simply.

To the right of the dining-room was a fine, bright, cheerful room, full of shelves on which stood innumerable jars and bottles of evil odor.

"My husband's laboratory," announced Katrina, proudly. "He has to have light and air."

Up-stairs there was a bedroom containing a huge double bed; a companion room off this was evidently used by the professor as a dressing-room and store-room. His clothes and several startling German trunks filled it. There were other rooms, but not one of them contained a rug or a piece of furniture. Slowly, convincingly, the knowledge entered our sentimental little hearts that Katrina's sole refuge for herself and her friends was the tiny, so-

called "sitting-room" down-stairs. She continued to show us about with housewifely pride. So far as we could see, her unconsciousness of her wrongs was complete. She was wholly untouched by self-pity.

"Do you mean to say—" began Jessica, warmly, and then suddenly realized that she herself could not say it. It was as well, for there was no opportunity. Even as Katrina was beginning to explain that her husband did not think it necessary to complete the furnishing of the house for a year or two, he summoned her to his side by a megaphonic demand for water to thin his ink. His impatience for this overcame his obvious aversion to exertion, and he came into the hall to take it from her hand as we descended the stairs. She introduced him to us, and he bowed gravely and with considerable dignity. He had a massive head, with iron-gray, curling hair, and near-sighted eyes, which peered at us vaguely through large, steel-rimmed spectacles. He surveyed us, not unpleasantly, but wholly without interest, nodded again, partly to himself and partly to us, as if our appearance had confirmed some dark surmise of his own, took the water from Katrina's hand, grunted an acknowledgment,

and retreated to his fastness in the study. He had not spoken one articulate word. Even Katrina, smiling her untroubled smile, seemed to feel that something in the situation demanded a word of comment.

"He is not at ease with girls," she murmured, gently. "He has taught only boys, and he does not understand women; but he has a kind heart."

Jessica and I ruminated thoughtfully upon this tribute as we went away. We had learned through the innocent prattle of our hostess's busy tongue that she desired a garden, but that Hans thought it a waste of time; that she had suggested open plumbing, and that Hans declined to go to the expense; that she saw little of her brothers nowadays, as Hans did not approve of them; that her old friends came to see her rarely since her marriage, as, for some reason unaccountable to Katrina, they seemed not to like her husband.

We waited until we were out of sight of the house, and then seated ourselves gloomily on a wayside rock under a sheltering tree. A robin, perched on a branch above our heads, burst into mocking song. The sun still shone; I wondered how it could.

"Well, of all the selfish beasts and unmanageable brutes!" Jessica began, hotly. Jessica's language was frequently too strong for elegance, and even at this exciting moment my sense of duty forced me to call the fact to her attention. I moreover, essayed judicious weighing of the situation as the most effective means of cooling her off.

"If the secret of happiness is work, as most authorities agree," I reminded Jessica, "Professor von Heller's wife ought to be the happiest bride in this country."

Jessica turned one disgusted glance upon me, rose with dignity, and moved haughtily down the road to a street-car which was bumping its way toward us on its somewhat uneven track.

"Oh, well, if you are going to be funny over a tragedy in which one of your dearest friends is a victim," she observed, icily, "we will not discuss the matter. But I, for one, have learned a lesson: I know *now* what matrimony is."

I had a dim sense that even this experience, interesting and educative though it was, could not be fairly regarded as a post-graduate course in matrimonial knowledge, and I ventured to say so.

Jessica set her teeth and declined to discuss

the matter further, resolutely turning the conversation to the neutral topic of a cat-bird which was mewing plaintively in a hedge behind us. Late that night, however, she awoke me from my innocent slumbers with a request for knowledge as to the correct spelling of *irrevocable* and *disillusionment.* She was at her desk, writing hard, with her brows knit into an elaborate pattern of cross-stitching. I knew the moment I looked upon her set young face that the missive was to Arthur Townsend Jennings, the brother of a classmate, whose letter urging her to "wait five years" for him Jessica had received only that morning. It was quite evident, even to the drowsiest observation, that Jessica was not promising to wait.

Jessica's pessimism on the subject of matrimony dated from that hour, and grew with each day that followed. Coldly, even as she had turned from the plea of Arthur Townsend Jennings, did she turn from all other suitors. She grew steadily in charm and beauty, and her opportunities to break hearts were, from the susceptible nature of man, of an almost startling frequency. Jessica grasped each one with what seemed even to my loyal eyes diabolical glee. She was an avenging Nemesis, hot on the trail

of man. Grave professors, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton Juniors and Seniors, loyal boy friends of her youth who came in manhood to lay their hearts at her feet—all of these and more Jessica sent forth from her presence, a long, stricken procession. "I know *now* what matrimony is," was Jessica's battle-cry. If, in a thoughtless partisan spirit, I sought to say a good word for one of her victims, pointing out his material advantages or his spiritual graces, or both, Jessica turned upon me with a stern reminder. "Have you forgotten Katrina?" she would ask. As I had not forgotten Katrina, the question usually silenced me.

For myself, I must admit, Jessica's Spartan spirit had its effect as an example. Left alone to work out the problem according to my elemental processes, I might possibly have arrived at the conclusion that Katrina's domestic infelicity, assuming that it existed, need not necessarily spread a sombre pall over the entire institution of matrimony. But Jessica's was a dominant personality, and I was easily influenced. In my humble way I followed her example; and though, lacking her beauty and magnetism, the havoc I wrought was vastly less than hers, I nevertheless succeeded in tem-

porarily blighting the lives of two middle-aged professors, one widower in the dry-goods line, and the editor of a yellow newspaper. This last, I must admit, my heart yearned over. I earnestly desired to pluck him from the burning, so to speak, and assist him to find the higher nature of which he had apparently entirely lost sight. There was something singularly pleasing to me in the personality of this gentleman, but Jessica would have none of him. I finally agreed to be a maiden aunt to him, and, this happy compromise effected, I was privileged to see him frequently. If at any time I faltered, quoting him too often on the political problems of the day, or thoughtlessly rereading his letters in Jessica's presence, she reminded me of Katrina. I sighed, and resumed the mantle, so to speak, of the maiden aunt. Unlike Katrina, I never had been good at running errands, and now, in my early thirties, I was taking on stoutness: it was plain that the risk of matrimony was indeed too great.

For we had been growing older, Jessica and I, and many things more or less agreeable had happened to us. We had been graduated with high honors, we had spent four years abroad in supplementary study, and we had then returned

to the congenial task of bringing education up to date in our native land. We taught, and taught successfully; and our girls went forth and married, or studied or taught, and came back to show us their babies or their theses, according to the character of their productiveness. We fell into the routine of academic life. Occasionally, at longer intervals as the years passed, an intrepid man, brushing aside the warnings of his anxious friends, presented himself for the favor of Jessica, and was sternly sent to join the long line of his predecessors. Life was full, life in its way was interesting, but it must be admitted that life was sometimes rather lonely. My editor, loyal soul that he was, wrote regularly, and came to see me twice a year. Professor Herbert Adams, a victim long at Jessica's feet, made sporadic departures from that position, and then humbly returned. These two alone were left us. Jessica acquired three gray hairs and a permanent crease in her intellectual brow.

During all these changing scenes we had not seen Katrina. Under no circumstances, after that first melancholy visit, would we willingly have seen her again. At long intervals we heard from her. We knew there were three

fat babies, whose infant charms, hitherto unparalleled, were caricatured in snapshots sent us by their proud mother. Jessica looked at these, groaned, and dropped them into the dark corners of our study.

Our visits home were rare, and there had been no time in any of them for a second call at the home of Professor von Heller. Seven years after our return from Europe, however, Jessica decided that she needed a rest and a summer in her native air. Moreover, she had just given Professor Adams his final *congé*, and he had left her in high dudgeon. I sapiently inferred that Jessica had found the experience something of a strain. As Jessica acted as expeditiously in other matters as in blighting lives, I need hardly add that we were transported to our home town with gratifying despatch. We had stepped from the train at the end of our journey before a satisfactory excuse for remaining behind had occurred to me, and it was obviously of little avail to mention it then. Twenty-four hours after the newspapers had chronicled the exciting news of our arrival, Katrina called on us.

We gasped as we looked at her. Was this, indeed, Katrina — this rosy, robust, glowing,

radiant German with shining eyes and with vitality flowing from her like the current of an electric battery? I looked at Jessica's faded complexion, the tired lines in her face, the white threads in her dark hair, and my heart contracted suddenly. I knew how I looked—vastly more tired, more faded than Jessica, for I had started from a point nearer to these undesirable goals. We three were about the same age. There were six months at the most between us. Who would believe it to look at us together?

Katrina seized us in turn, and kissed us on both cheeks. To me there was something life-giving in the grasp of her strong, firm hands, in the touch of her cool, soft lips. She insisted that we come to see her and at once. When would we come? We had no excuse now, she pointed out, and if we needed a rest, the farm—her home—was the best place in the world for rest. With a faint access of hope I heard her. The farm? Had she, then, moved? No, she was still in the same place, Katrina explained, but the city had lurched off in another direction, leaving her and Hans and the children undisturbed in their peaceful pastoral life.

"Ka-tri-na!"

I almost jumped, but it was only a memory, helped on by my vivid fancy. I had tried to picture the peaceful pastoral life, but all that responded was the echo of that distant summons. Jessica, however, was explaining that we would come—soon, very soon—next week—yes, Tuesday, of course. Jessica subsequently inquired of me, with the strong resentment of the person who is in the wrong, how I expected her to get us out of it. It was something that had to be done. Obviously, she said, it was one of those things to do and have done with.

She discoursed languidly about Katrina in the interval between the promise and the visit.

"Well! Of course she's well," drawled Jessica. "She's the kind that wouldn't know it if she wasn't well. For the rest, she's phlegmatic, has no aspirations, and evidently no sensitiveness. All she asks is to wait on that man and his children, and from our glimpse of Hans we can safely surmise that he is still gratifying that simple aspiration. Heavens! don't let's talk about it! It's too horrible!"

Tuesday came, and we made our second visit to Katrina's—fourteen years to a month from the time of our first. Again the weather was perfect, but the years and professional cares

had done their fatal work, and our lagging spirits refused to respond to the jocund call of the day. Again we approached, with an absurd shrinking, the bleak old house. The bleak old house was not there; nay, it was there, but transformed. It was painted red. Blossoming vines clambered over it; French windows descended to meet its wide verandas; striped awnings sheltered its rooms from the July sun. The lawns, sloping down to a close-clipped hedge, were green and velvety. The iron dog was gone. A great hammock swung in the corner of the veranda, and in it tumbled a fat, pink child and a kitten. The fat child proved that all was not a dream. It was Katrina reborn—the Katrina of that first day in school, twenty years and more ago. Rather unsteadily we walked up the gravel path, rather uncertainly we rang the bell. A white-capped maid ushered us in. Yes, Frau von Heller was at home and expecting the ladies. Would the ladies be gracious enough to enter? The ladies would. The ladies entered.

The partition between two of the rooms had been taken down and the entire floor made over. There was a wide hall, with a great living-room at the right. As we approached it

we heard the gurgle of a baby's laugh, Katrina's answering ripple, and the murmur of a bass voice buzzing like a cheerful bumblebee. Our footsteps were deadened by the thick carpet, and our entrance did not disturb for a moment the pleasing family tableau on which we gazed. The professor was standing with his baby in his arms, his profile toward the door, facing his wife, who was laughing up at him. The infant had grasped a handful of his father's wavy gray hair and was making an earnest and gratifyingly successful effort to drag it out by the roots. Von Heller's face, certainly ten years younger than when we saw it last, was alight with pride in this precocious offspring. Seeing us, he tossed the baby on his shoulder, holding it there with one accustomed arm, and came to meet us, his wife close by his side. They reached us together, but it was the professor who gave us our welcome. This time he needed no introduction.

"My wife's friends, Miss Lawrence and Miss Gifford, is it not?" He smiled, extending his big hand to each of us in turn, and giving our hands a grip the cordiality of which made us wince. "It is a pleasure. But you will excuse this young man, is it not?" He lowered

the baby to his breast as he spoke, while his wife fell upon our necks in hospitable greeting. "He has no manners, this young man," added the father, sadly, when Katrina had thus expressed her rapture in our arrival. "He would yell if I put him down, and he has lungs—ach, but he has lungs!"

He busied himself drawing forth chairs for us, apparently quite unhampered by his small burden. We contemplated the baby and said fitting things. He had cheeks like beefsteaks and eyes that stuck out of his head with what appeared to be joyful interest in his surroundings. Katrina exclaimed over a sudden discovery:

"But you haven't taken off your hats!" she cried. "Hans, give the baby to Gretchen and take my friends' wraps and hats up to the guest-room. I don't want Miss Lawrence to climb stairs."

The professor obediently summoned the nurse, dropped the baby, burdened himself with our garments, and ambled off with the tread of a peaceful elephant. When he returned, with the eager look of a retriever waiting for another stick, his wife promptly met his hopes.

"Arrange the easy-chair for Miss Lawrence,

dear," she said, comfortably, "and put an ottoman under her feet. I want her to rest while she is here."

The professor did it, while we gazed. He also inquired feelingly as to the state of Jessica's health, showed a sympathy almost human in her replies, and placed a pillow behind her back. Subsequently, during that call, he did these things:

He answered the telephone half a dozen times, faithfully repeating to his wife the messages of her various friends, and carrying hers back, as she declined to be torn from us long enough to talk to them herself.

He rounded up the remaining two children and presented them for our inspection, straightening his son's shoulders with an experienced hand, and tying with consummate skill the bow on his little girl's hair.

He went to the stable and ordered the family carriage, that we might drive later in the afternoon.

He searched for and found the morning newspaper, thoughtlessly dropped in the waste-paper basket by the maid, and he read aloud to us a paragraph to which Katrina had referred chronicling the achievements of a classmate of ours.

He brought to Katrina, at different times and from remote parts of the house, one white shawl, six photographs of the children, an essay written by their son, aged ten, two books, a bib to meet a sudden need of the baby, and Katrina's address-book. He did these things, and he did them cheerfully, and with the unmistakable ease of frequent repetition. I glanced at Jessica. The expressions of incredulity and amazement to which she had freely yielded during the first half-hour of our call had given way to a look of deep reflection.

Subsequently Katrina showed us her home. The room that had been the professor's study was now part of the large general living-room. The laboratory was now Katrina's personal sitting-room. Through its French windows we saw Katrina's garden blossoming like the rose. Jessica asked the present location of the professor's study and laboratory. She subsequently admitted to me that she should not have done it, but that to leave the house without the information would have been a physical and moral impossibility. Katrina looked at her vaguely, as one seeking to recall a fleeting moment of the long-dead past; but the professor responded with gratified alacrity.

"But you shall see them!" he cried. "Surely, yes;" and like a jovial school-boy he led us up to the third floor. There, indeed, was his study —a hall bedroom, much crowded by his desk and easy-chair; and off it, in a closet, were his beloved bottles and chemicals. I felt a throb of sympathy for the professor, but he was evidently blissfully ignorant of any reason for such a sentiment.

"The *Mütterchen* and the babies need the rest," he smiled, complacently. "They must not climb too many stairs—no;" and he led the way back to comfort with unconsciousness of the painful contrast between past and present conditions that made Jessica and me carefully refrain from meeting each other's eyes. The children, when they espied him upon our return, uttered shrieks of joy. The baby sprang to his arms, the little boy swarmed up his leg. The picture of Professor von Heller as a perfectly trained husband and father was complete.

In silence, after our prolonged farewells, Jessica and I left the house. In silence we entered the trolley-car; in silence we rode home. At last I voiced a sudden suspicion.

"Do you think," I asked, hopefully, "that

it was all a—a—well, that she persuaded him to do it just this once, for our edification?"

Jessica shook her head.

"I thought so, at first," she conceded, slowly. "That in itself would have been a miracle—one I'd never believe if I hadn't seen it with these eyes. But everything disproves the theory. Do you think she could have trained those children to advance and retreat like a Casino ballet? On the contrary, it's evident that they literally live on him. They've worn the creases off his trousers! Didn't you notice where the creases left off and the sliding-place of the babies began?"

I reluctantly admitted that this detail had escaped my observation. Jessica sighed.

"Incredible as it is," she summed up, "it's all true. It's the real thing."

"It opens quite a vista," I observed, thoughtfully. "If you would like Professor Adams's present address, I can give it to you. He is in the Adirondacks with his sister Mollie, and I had a letter from her this morning."

Jessica looked at me and urged me not to be vulgar. Her thoughtful expression did not lift.

"If Katrina can do *that* with *that* man,"

I murmured, reflectively, as we entered the house, "I really believe you could work wonders with Adams. He would probably do the cooking and marketing—"

"If you're so impressed," remarked Jessica, in incisive tones, "I wonder you don't yield to the prayers and tears of your editor man."

My reply made Jessica sink into a hall chair which was fortunately at hand.

"I am going to," I said, placidly. And I did.

Jessica's nature being less womanly and yielding than mine, her surrender was a matter of longer time. In the interval I quite forgot her unimportant affairs, being wholly absorbed in the really extraordinary values of my own. Two weeks before the reopening of college, my reformed yellow journalist, who had come West to spend his brief vacation with me, was seated by my side one evening studying the admirable effect of a ring he had just placed on my finger. It is singular how fraught with human interest such moments can be, and Edward and I failed to hear Jessica as she opened the door. She looked over our heads as she spoke to me. Her face was rather red, but her

voice and manner expressed a degree of indifference which I am convinced no human being has ever really felt on any subject.

"Did you say that you could give me Mollie Adams's address?" asked Jessica.

XI

BART HARRINGTON, GENIUS

THE assistant Sunday editor of the New York *Searchlight* was busy. This was not an unusual condition, but it frequently included unusually irritating features. His superior, Wilson, the Sunday editor, was a gentleman with a high brow and a large salary, who, having won a reputation as "a Napoleon of Journalism," had successfully cultivated a distaste for what he called "details." His specialty was the making of suggestions in editorial council, in cheery expectation that they would be carried out by his associates—an expectation so rarely realized that Mr. Wilson's visage had almost a habit of hurt wonder. "Details" continued to absorb the activity of the Sunday *Searchlight* office, and Maxwell, the assistant editor, attended to them all, murmuring bitterly against his chief as he labored.

On this special morning, moreover, he was

receiving telephoned bulletins of the gradual disintegration of his biggest "special," scheduled for the coming Sunday edition, which was to tell with sympathetic amplitude of a beautiful French maiden who had drowned herself because some young man no longer loved her. The active reporter assigned to the case had telephoned first his discovery that the girl never had a lover, but cheerily suggested that this explained her suicide as well as the earlier theory, and wasn't so hackneyed, sagely adding that he would get the story anyhow. Subsequently he had rung up the office to report, with no slight disgust, that there was no suicide to explain, as the girl was not dead. She had merely gone to visit friends in the country, and the people in the house, missing her, had decided that the peaceful waters of the Hudson—

Maxwell hung up the receiver with a few crisp remarks addressed to space, and absorbed in awestruck silence by a young woman at the other end of the room who eased her typewriting labor by pausing to hear them fully. It was at this inauspicious moment that the card of Mr. Bart Harrington was brought in by an office boy. Maxwell surveyed it with strong disfavor.

"Who is he?" he asked, regarding the office boy severely.

The office boy avowed deprecatingly that he didn't know.

"He 'ain't never been here before," he submitted, in extenuation. "He says he's got a Sunday story."

Maxwell resigned himself to the waste of five minutes of precious time.

"Show 'm in," he commanded, testily. He sat down at his desk and turned toward the door an expression that reminded callers of the value of time and the brevity of life. Mr. Harrington, who had followed the boy through the door with conviction of these two things, dropped into a chair beside the editor's desk and surveyed Maxwell with a smile so young, so trustful, and withal so engaging, that unconsciously the stern features of that functionary relaxed. Nevertheless, he was not jarred out of his routine.

"Got your story with you, Mr. Harrington?" he asked, briskly, holding out his hand for the manuscript. "If you'll leave it, I'll read—"

Harrington interrupted him with an impressive shake of his head. Then he settled back in his chair, crossed one leg comfortably over the

other, plunged his hands deep in the pockets of his very shabby overcoat, and continued to regard the editor with his singularly boyish, dimpling smile. With one swift glance Maxwell took him in, from the broken boot on the foot he was gently swinging to and fro to the thick, curly locks on his handsome head. He had a complexion like a girl's, a dimple in each cheek, and a jaw like a bull-dog's. He was all of six feet tall, and his badly made clothes could not wholly conceal the perfect lines of his figure. He was about twenty-two years old, Maxwell decided, and, notwithstanding his dimples, his complexion, his youth, and his smile, he conveyed a vivid impression of masculinity and strength. He was wholly self-possessed, and his manner suggested that the business which had brought him where he was was of such urgent value and importance that the busy world itself might well hush its noisy activities long enough to hear of it. To his own great surprise, Maxwell waited until his caller was prepared to speak.

Harrington shook his head again slowly. Then he tapped his forehead with the second finger of his right hand.

"I have it heah," he said, slowly, referring

evidently to the brow he had indicated, and speaking with a slight drawl and the strongly marked accent of the Southern mountaineer. "I 'lowed I wouldn't write it till I knew you-all wanted it. I'd like to tell it. Then if—"

Maxwell nodded, and glanced at his watch.

"Fire away," he said, elegantly. "But be as quick as you can, please. This is closing day and every minute counts."

Harrington smiled his ingenuous smile. It was a wistful smile—not a happy one—but it seemed, somehow, to illumine the office. Maxwell reflected irritably that there was something unusually likable about the fellow, but he wished he'd hurry up and get out. From force of habit his fingers grasped a blue pencil on his desk, and he began to fumble nervously among the manuscripts that lay before him. Harrington settled back more firmly in his chair, and the swinging of his torn boot was accelerated a trifle, but his voice when he spoke was full of quiet confidence.

"It's a good thing, suh," he said, "and I can tell you-all about it in a sentence. I'm goin' to commit suicide to-day, an' I agree to write the experience foh you, up to the last minute, if you-all will have me buried decently. I

don't cayah to be shovelled into the Pottah's Field."

Maxwell dropped the blue pencil and wheeled to look at him. Then his face hardened.

"It's a pretty bad joke," he said, "or a bum sort of bid for charity. In either case you can't waste any more of my—"

But Harrington had sprung to his feet, his blond young face black with passion.

"Damn you!" he hissed, thrusting his head down close to the other's and clinching his fists. "How dahe you-all say I lie o' ask charity? I'd see you-all in hell befoah I'd take a cent of youah damned money. 'Ain't you got brains enough in youah haid to see that I've got to the end of mah rope?"

Maxwell was a clever man, educated in the world's university. He knew truth when he met it, and he knew human nature.

"Sit down," he said, quietly, "and tell me about it. I'm sorry I spoke as I did, but you must admit that your proposition was rather startling."

Harrington sat down, still breathing hard in his excitement, but evidently making a resolute effort to control himself.

"That's why I brought it heah," he said, an-

swering the other's last words. "You-all like stahtlin' things, don't you? That's what you print. I'm offerin' you a straight bahgain, suh —a business proposition. If you-all don't want it, say so."

Maxwell smiled in his turn, but there was nothing ironic in the smile, nor in the look he turned on his fellow-man.

"It's not quite as simple as you seem to think," he explained, gently. "But tell me more about it. What led to this decision? What makes you think suicide is the only way out of your troubles? That's a part of the story, you know. Let me have that first, in a few words.

"It can be told, suh, in three," said the Southerner. His smile had returned. His voice was the cool voice of one who discussed abstract things. "I'm a failyuh. This wo'ld 'ain't no use foh failyuhs. I've given myself all the time and chances I dese'ved, but I cayn't win out, so I've got to *git* out. The's no one to ca'e. I've no kin, no one dependin' on me in any way. As foh me, I'm ti'ed; life ain't wuth the effo't."

Maxwell regarded him.

"You don't look like a quitter," he said, thoughtfully.

The boy's face blazed again, but he kept his temper.

"To quit means to give somethin' up," he said, doggedly. "I ain't givin' anythin' up. I 'ain't got anythin' to give up. Life without wo'k, o' interest, o' fren's, o' ambition, o' love—that ain't livin'! If you-all evah tried it, you'd know. I 'ain't been so chee'ful in yeahs as I've been sence I made up my mind to 'quit,' as you-all call it."

"You've got health, haven't you?" demanded Maxwell.

"Yes."

Maxwell brought his hand down on the desk with an air of finality.

"Then you've got everything. Do you mean to tell me that a fellow like you can't earn enough to support himself? If you do, you're talking rot."

Harrington took this with his wide, guileless grin. He was not offended now, for he felt the friendly interest and sympathy under the other's words. His voice when he replied was gentler.

"I ain't sayin' I can't keep body an' soul together, foh maybe I can," he conceded. "But I'm sayin' *that* ain't *life*. I'm sayin' I ain't

been fitted fo' wo'k. I 'ain't been educated. I've lived in a log-cabin down in the Virginia mountains all mah life. I left thah six weeks ago, after mah mother died. She was the last of ouah family but me. I 'ain't never been to school. She taught me to read in the Bible, an' to write. I 'ain't nevah read anotheh book except the Bible and Mistah Shakespeah's poems, an' Mistah Pluta'ch's *Lives of Great Men.* I know them by hea't. I don't know whe' she got them o' whe' she came from. She was different from othah mountain women. I've been No'th six weeks, and I've tried ha'd to find a place whah I could fit in, but th' ain't none. Men must be trained fuh wo'k; I ain't trained. I cayn't go back, foh the's no one thah, an' I hate the mountains."

Maxwell's reply was brief and to the point.

"Think you could learn to run our elevator without killing us all?" he inquired. "Well, you've got to. You've been talking awful guff, you know. Now you're going to work, right here. We need a new man. The one we have has been drunk three days. You're going to run the elevator and get fifteen dollars a week to begin with. Here's your first week's salary in advance. I'll arrange about the job with the

superintendent. I'll give you some books, and you can educate yourself. When you're above elevator work we'll give you something better. You'll probably have my job inside of a year," he ended, jocosely.

The hand of the mountaineer stretched out to him trembled as Maxwell grasped it.

"You ah the only white man I've found in the No'th," said the Southerner, breathlessly. "I'll make good, as they say up heah. But I don't know how I can thank you."

"Don't try," said Maxwell, brusquely. "Be here at eight in the morning. By nine there will be a few callers I may want you to throw down the shaft."

Thus began the connection between the *Searchlight* and Bart Harrington, subsequently its most popular employé. Before the week was over all the reporters and most of the editors had casually sought from Maxwell some details concerning his protégé, but had received few. Harrington was a new man, and he came from the Virginia mountains, and was most obliging and altogether engaging. This was all the information acquired even by the indefatigable Miss Mollie Merk, whose success in extracting from individuals information it was

their dearest desire to conceal had made her a star member of the *Searchlight's* staff. It was to Miss Merk, however, that Harrington announced his first important discovery. Leaning across her desk one evening after his successor had taken the "car," the new elevator man touched a subject much upon his mind.

"I got wet the othah day," he began, conversationally, "an' mah landlady let me go to the kitchen to dry mah clothes. I obse'ved as I sat by huh stove that the lid of the wash boilah kept liftin' up, all by itself, an' then I saw 'twas raised by the steam of the hot watah inside. I kep' thinkin' 'bout it, an' it seems to me thah's an idea thah, a soht of ene'gy, you know, that might be used in big ways. I mus' think it out."

Mollie Merk looked at him, vague memories of one James Watts stirring uneasily in her brain.

"There's a good deal written about steam," she said, sympathetically. "I'll bring you a book on it."

She did, for Harrington was already high in her regard; and quite possibly the volume killed in that youth's aspiring soul the germ of a beautiful hope. But he was to the fore very

soon with a discovery of equal weight. This time his confidant was Maxwell.

"Why is it," he asked that busy citizen one evening, "that when I get in the bathtub the water rises highah? Ain't the' some principle the' that is impo'tant? As I think it ovah—"

Maxwell hurriedly assured him that there was, and the volume on steam was followed by a treatise on specific gravity, which gave Mr. Harrington food for reflection for several days. Nevertheless, the discovery that others had been before him did not depress him in the least. He gave the Sunday editor an insight into his views on one occasion when that gentleman was able to convince him that Isaac Newton and not Bart Harrington had discovered the law of gravitation while watching an apple fall from a tree.

"I obse'ved it, too, suh," argued Harrington, sturdily, defending his position as a scientific discoverer. "Of co'se I see the fo'ce of you'h rema'k that the othah man was *first.* That is unfo'tunate foh me. But does it affect the value of *my* discovery? It does not, suh."

"There's a good deal in it," Wilson conceded to Maxwell, after he had delightedly repeated this conversation. "Of course, the fellow has

an unusual mind. It's a pity he's always a few hundred years behind the time, but, as he hints, that needn't dim our admiration for the quality of his brain fibre."

Maxwell laughed uneasily.

"I can't make up my mind," he admitted, in his turn, "whether he's a genius or a plain fool. He lost his dinner last night explaining to me how the power of Niagara could be applied to practical uses. He was horribly depressed when I told him it not only could be, but was. I let him talk, though, to see what his ideas were, and they were very practical."

"I call that mighty encouraging," said the chief, optimistically. "He's getting down to modern times. After he has discovered the telephone and telegraph and cable and wireless telegraphy he may tackle telepathy and give us something new."

But Harrington indulged in an unexplained digression at this point. He discovered literature and became acquainted with the works of one Charles Dickens, of whose genius he made himself the sounding trumpet-call for the ears of an indifferent world.

"The's a book called *David Coppe'field*," he confided to Maxwell one night when he had lin-

gered for a chat with his benefactor. "It's great, suh. You should read it sometime, Mistah Maxwell; you would appreciate its wo'th." He outlined the plot then and there, and Maxwell good-naturedly listened, finding his compensation in the enthusiast's original comments on character and situation. This, however, established a bad precedent, and Maxwell was subsequently obliged to hear a careful synopsis of *Little Dorrit*, *Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Oliver Twist*, in quick succession, followed by the somewhat painful recitation of most of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*—for Harrington was now entering the daisied field of poetry.

It was at this point that Maxwell felt himself constrained to give his protégé a few words of advice, the city editor having objected to an enforced hearing of the plot of *Ivanhoe*, and Mollie Merk having admitted that she had climbed six flights of stairs twice a day for a week in preference to hearing the final eighteen stanzas of *Paradise Lost.*

Maxwell explained the situation to his friend as gently as he could one morning when Harrington had interrupted a talk between himself and a distinguished Western editor who was spending a few days in New York.

"You see, old man," he ended, kindly, "this is a big, new world to you, but the rest of us have been living in it all our lives. We've taken in these things you're discovering—or we've had them driven into us at school. So—er—they're not new, and while we appreciate them we haven't got time to go over them all again. When you get up to modern fiction—the things people are reading to-day—"

With one expressive gesture of the hand Mr. Harrington demolished modern fiction.

"*I* 'ain't got time foh that, Mistah Maxwell," he said, respectfully. "I read one, and I regret to say, suh, that it was too much. I have looked into othe's, but I go no fu'thah. I have tried to open to you gentlemen the great wo'ks I have discove'ed, an' youah reply is that you-all have read them, suh. I am surprised. Do you give one glance at a picture an' nevah look again? Do you listen once to music, o' must it be something new and mode'n ev'ry time? Last night I heard the composition of a musician named Beethoven, who, I have learned, has been dead foh yeahs. Yet people still listen to his notes. Why don't they read these books of Mistah Dickens and Mistah Scott and Mistah Shakespeah?"

Maxwell murmured feebly that a few did. A fitting response to Harrington's arraignment somehow eluded him, and before he had found the words he wanted an unexpected interruption came from the Western editor, who had been listening to the conversation with almost painful interest.

"Mr. Harrington," he asked, abruptly, "can you write?"

Harrington looked surprised and boyishly injured.

"Yes, suh," he replied, stiffly. "I can read and write."

"Oh, of course, of course," explained the other, hastily. "I don't mean that. Can you write for the press? Have you tried to write anything for other people to read?"

Harrington's characteristic smile flashed forth.

"I have submitted sev'al ahticles to Mistah Maxwell," he said, with some dignity, "but thus far I have not been fo'tunate enough—"

Maxwell drew a little package of manuscripts from a pigeon-hole in his desk and handed them to the visitor without a word. They spoke for themselves. The latter glanced through them, frowning. Maxwell returned to his work. Harrington waited. At last the Westerner handed

the papers back to his Eastern colleague, shaking his head as he did so.

"These won't do at all," he said, decidedly, "but they confirm my impression that this man can write something worth while." He addressed himself to Maxwell now, discussing Harrington as impersonally as if he were absent, but from time to time his keen eyes returned to the Southerner's face.

"Here's a man," he began, didactically, "who is hundreds of years behind the times. But please remember that he would have been Watts, Newton, and several other discoverers if he had existed before them. He's as much of a pilgrim on this earth to-day as if he were a visitor from another planet. But he has an extraordinary type of mind and very good taste—a strong, ignorant, instinctive feeling for the best. If he would write a series of short articles giving his point of view to the busy men and women of to-day, they should be 'good stuff'—a sort of artistic voice crying in the commercial wilderness, don't you see. You or some one else may have to put them into shape, until he catches the idea, but he will catch it all right. He's clever enough. If you want to try him, and it turns out as I think it will, I'll

buy the material for simultaneous publication in Chicago. What do you say?"

"Agreed," said Maxwell, briefly. "I think you're right. We'll try it, anyhow. I guess we won't have much trouble persuading Harrington to favor us with the opportunity of examining his manuscript." He smiled as he glanced at the other. Harrington's eyes were shining. His words, when he spoke, came breathlessly.

"I'll have the first copy ready in the mo'ning, Mistah Maxwell," he promised. "And I reckon," he added, straightening his splendid shoulders—"I reckon I'll give up the elevatah, suh."

Maxwell laughed in high good-humor.

"Oh yes," he agreed, "I guess we'll have to give you a successor there, in any event. However this experiment turns out, it's time you had something better than that."

Harrington's first paper was signed "A Visitor from Mars," and Maxwell marvelled as he read it. It was not a great production, and it was full of small faults; but there was an indescribable naïveté and charm about it to which its quaint, old-time style added the final

touch. Harrington's studies of what he called "the olden masters" had not been in vain. Late the next evening, in the peace of his small Harlem flat, Maxwell submitted the manuscript to his wife for criticism. He passed it over without comment, desiring the unprejudiced opinion of the intelligent general reader, and Mrs. Maxwell read it twice, very carefully, before she handed it back. When she did there was a mist over her bright brown eyes.

"The darling thing!" she cried. "Who wrote it, Bob? It's as clever as it can be, and yet there's something about it that makes me feel queer and choky. It's—it's"—her face brightened—"it's something like the feeling I had when little Bobbie wrote me his first letter, that time I went home to take care of mother. One almost expects to see the words staggering down one side of the page in dear little, crooked, printed letters. It's the manuscript of a grown-up, sophisticated baby."

Maxwell took the copy from her, well pleased at this conjugal confirmation of his own impression.

"It's Harrington's," he explained, "and he's not sophisticated enough to hurt anybody yet. But he's going to make a success of this job—

there's no doubt of that. I'll ask him to come up to dinner to-morrow night and go over the stuff with me a bit. I don't want to do it in the office."

The Western editor was equally enthusiastic the following day. He was also glowing pleasantly in the confirmation of his own keenness of intuition.

"You wouldn't have seen what you had here," he explained to Maxwell, unnecessarily. "This is pretty much like genius. This fellow will be writing his autobiography some day, and perhaps he'll remember his humble discoverers. Meantime, don't you spoil his work by trying to edit it. Let it alone. It's all right."

The column of "The Visitor from Mars" grew to two columns, and became a strong feature of the Sunday *Searchlight*. Harrington, now in possession of a fair weekly income and unlimited leisure, bought new clothes, rented a sitting-room, bedroom, and bath in a comfortable bachelor apartment-house, and spent his days browsing in libraries, where he read omnivorously. Incidentally, he discovered not only the telephone, telegraph, and other inventions predicted by the Sunday editor, but a locomotive fire-box which had received some

favor among railroad officials for ten years, and a superb weapon of destruction which had been used in the Japanese army for six.

"He's getting on!" cried Wilson, delightedly, when Maxwell recounted these small disappointments in an otherwise inspiring onward career. "He's learned to dress like a gentleman, speak like a gentleman, and look like a gentleman, and he has also learned that there have been a few active minds in the world before his came. Give him time. He'll do something big yet."

Harrington promptly verified this prediction by falling in love, which he did on a scale and with an abandon unprecedented in the history of Park Row. It was a tempestuous upheaval for the emotional Southerner, and every other interest in his life retired to the remotest background and remained there, unseen and unsuspected. His choice fell on a woman reporter of the *Searchlight*, a quiet, refined young girl, whose journalistic activities were confined to reports of meetings of women's clubs and the descriptions of other social events. For her Bart Harrington commanded the morning stars to sing together, and dared the dazzled sun to look upon her like. To him she was Laura, Beatrice, Juliet, Francesca—the essence of all

the loves of all the ages in one perfect form. During their brief engagement he called for her in a cab each morning, and drove her to her home each night. He would have laid a carpet of flowers for her from the office to the curb had it been practicable. Also, he discovered Keats and Shelley and Byron and Swinburne, and quoted them until the office boys, who alone remained to listen to him, demanded that increase of salary justly attached to increased nervous strain. Swinburne, Harrington promptly decided, he did not like. There was an earthiness in his verse, he explained to Maxwell, a material side, wholly lacking in the love of the right man for the right woman—in other words, in his own love for Miss Evans. He wrote a column about this kind of love in his Mars department, and a hundred thousand men read it with gurgles of warm appreciation and quoted it at dinner the next night. Then he married Miss Evans and became interested in the price of coal and other household supplies. His absorption in these topics was almost feverish. He talked about them morning, noon, and night. His interest in literature flickered and died out. To Maxwell, his first and still his best friend, he finally confided his dilemma.

"You see, old man," he began, one morning about six months after the wedding, "we've discovered, Clara and I, that the least we can live on in New York is fifty dollahs a week. And you see I'm only getting forty. It's serious, isn't it? But Clara says that if we buy all ouah canned goods at Lacy's—"

Maxwell stopped him with a gesture of desperation.

"Harrington, if you say another word I shall go crazy," he announced, with the calmness of despair. "We'll give you fifty dollars a week. Now consider that settled, and for God's sake get your mind off it. If you don't look out you'll be writing about coal and canned goods in your Mars column. What are you going to write this week, anyhow?" he demanded, with sudden suspicion.

Harrington looked guilty.

"I thought I'd say something about how prices have advanced," he faltered. "Clara says that two yeahs ago—" But Maxwell had taken him by the shoulders.

"No, you don't!" he shouted, fiercely. "You'll keep on writing about literature and life and lily-pads and love—that's what you'll do. If you don't, you'll lose your job. Don't you dare to

introduce a single-dollar sign or canned tomato into those columns," he added, warningly, as he returned to his work.

Harrington's look of reproach as he went out haunted him for days—so long, in fact, that he bore with extraordinary patience a confidence that gentleman favored him with several months later. He came to the office one morning wearing an expression oddly combined of pride and shame, in which first one and then the other predominated. For a long time he discussed apartments and janitors and domestic supplies, and Maxwell humored him. Then he said:

"I've been an awful ass, Maxwell, but that's no reason why I should keep on being one, is it? I've got to tell you something impo'tant, and I'm going to do it now. I can't write any more about literatuah of the past and lily-pads of the present, as you would say. Who ca'es about 'em? *I* don't. The wo'ld to-day is interested in the life of to-day. Men think about theah wo'k and theah incomes and theah homes and theah wives and theah children, and that's *all* they think about. And women think about men, and that's all *they* think about. And heah I'm writing all the time about literatuah—litera-

tuah." He turned the word over in his mouth and ejected it with supreme contempt.

As once before, Maxwell was silent in the presence of simple truth. He rallied, however, and voiced a protest.

"I suppose you haven't lost interest in earning your living," he suggested, ironically. "How do you intend to do that if you give up this job?"

Harrington flushed a little, and cleared his throat nervously before he spoke. Then he drew a paper from his pocket, and as his fingers touched it his face cleared and happy pride beamed from him.

"I've got something else," he said, simply. "I waited to see how it would tu'n out befoah I told you. It's quite a story. You see," he went on expansively, settling back in his chair, and swinging his foot with the characteristic swing of the boy of two years before—"you see, Clara needed a hat-pin, the kind that would stay in and keep a hat *on*. None of them do, Clara said. So I made one foh huh, and Clara's brothah saw it and thought it was a good thing. He's a lawyer, you know. He showed it to some man with money, and they took it up and we patented it, and now we've got a facto'y

and we're selling it. It's—it's making lots of money." He turned an apologetic eye on his friend and continued, more firmly: "They gave me twenty thousand dollahs down and twenty pe' cent. of the stock, and a block of stock foh you, because I insisted on that. I want you in on my luck. Heah it is. E. W. Hubbard is the chief backah, and he says this is wuth ten thousand dollahs. He says every woman in Ame'ica will be wearing one of ouah hat-pins this time next yeah."

He laid the certificate on the table as he spoke, and for a moment Maxwell sat staring at it, speechless. He knew Hubbard—a rich, shrewd financier, and no leader of forlorn-hopes. If Hubbard was in the thing the thing was all right. But a *hat-pin!* Maxwell looked at the certificate and thought of the hat-pin, and reviewed the Harrington of the past two years, and felt a horrible desire to laugh and to cry. Then he pushed the paper toward the inventor.

"It's awfully good of you, old man," he said, huskily. "But of course I can't take this. There's no reason why you should give me ten thousand dollars, you know."

Harrington laughed—a queer little laugh.

"Ain't they a reason?" he asked, lapsing in

his earnestness into the careless grammar he had almost overcome. "Well, I guess I know moah than any one else 'bout *that.* Do you remembah the fifteen dollahs you lent me the day I came heah? Well, suh, I was sta'ving. I hadn't eaten fo' two days, an' I couldn't get wo'k, an' I couldn't beg. That's why I meant to kill myself. That money saved me. Now heah's this thing. It ain't money. It's an *idea.* It's an idea out of my haid, an' that haid wouldn't be heah at all if it wasn't fo' you. You've given me mah chance. What I've done ain't much, but it's brought results, and results ah the things that count. So we'll just call it interest, if you don't mind. I think it's goin' to be wuth while. An' you know," he added, almost timidly, "we ah friends—ahn't we, you and I?"

Maxwell wrung his hand. Then he picked up the certificate, folded it, and put it carefully into his pocket.

"Thanks, old man," he said, quietly. "It's the biggest thing that's ever come my way, and I'll take it—from my friend."

Later, when Harrington had taken his jubilant departure, Maxwell related the incident to his chief. Wilson listened with flattering at-

tention. At the end he nodded sympathetically.

"He's all right," he said, "and you needn't worry about him. He's got one quality left that sets him far enough apart from the rabble of to-day." He looked keenly at the young man as he added, suddenly: "Of all the fellows you've ever helped, Maxwell—and I know you've helped a lot in one way or another—has any one of them before to-day ever shown you any gratitude?"

Maxwell shook his head. "Don't remember any," he admitted. "But I didn't expect any, and don't want any."

"And you don't get it," ended the older man, with a sigh. "It's the rarest thing in life. So make the most of it this time, my boy. One doesn't often meet a visitor from Mars!"

THE END

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